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PRINCIPAL INFLUENCES ON PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

by

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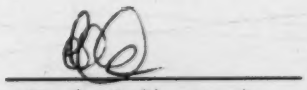

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Date: March 29, 2001

In Memory Of

My Parents

Joe and Stella

ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this study centred on how principals impacted the process of Teacher Professional Growth Plan Development and its implementation. The second purpose was to explore best practices for administrators and teachers to use as guidelines when approaching the topic of professional growth plans.

Data were collected primarily from interviews with three principal and seven teacher respondents as well as review of relevant board and provincial policies with respect to teacher professional growth plans. Recent literature in the area of professional development and principal leadership formed the basis of discussions with teachers and principals. Interview data and relevant policies were analyzed thematically.

The findings of this study indicated that both principals and teachers had welcomed the implementation of local board policies with respect to professional growth plans. Reflective practice was identified as a useful and essential component of teacher professional development. Although teachers and principals agreed about the necessity of reflective practice, there was little evidence from this study that teachers engaged in what the literature defines as reflective practice. However there was some evidence that principals supported and encouraged teachers to participate in reflective practice.

Recommendations regarding professional development practices are made to the various stakeholder groups and are included as concluding remarks.

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CHAPTER 1

The Problem

Supervision and evaluation of teachers in Alberta prior to 1997 was governed by provincial legislation adopted in 1985 as a result of the Jim Keegstra case (Fenwick, 2000). This legislation called for teachers to be evaluated on a cyclical basis typically beginning during their first year of teaching. Individual teachers would then be evaluated annually until they had attained a "continuous contract" with the employing board. Subsequent evaluations were then conducted based on the employing school board policy and ranged from two to five years.

Following the adoption of the policy in 1985, the provincial government commissioned a large study (see Haughey and Ratsoy, 1993) resulting in several recommendations being brought forward regarding teacher supervision and evaluation. Haughey et al, found there was general dissatisfaction with the methodologies used during the supervision and evaluative processes. Using alternative models of teacher supervision and evaluation was one of the many changes proposed in this study.

The Alberta Teachers' Association has been generally supportive of the government moving toward inclusion of Teacher Professional Growth Plans within the realm of teacher supervision and evaluation. The Alberta Teachers' Association has also been involved in the process of policy adoption. Through negotiations with the provincial government and political maneuvering, one of the major adoption and changes in operational policies at the provincial level was the adoption of policy 2.1.5 mandating the use of professional growth plans for teachers in the Alberta.

On May 14th, 1997, Gary Mar, the then minister of education in Alberta, ushered in a new and challenging era for teachers by bringing forward ministerial order #016/97. With the signing of the ministerial order, the landscape of teaching in the province of Alberta was forever changed. The document, Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta, provides a framework for teachers to formalize their professional growth undertakings during a given school year. In early 1998, the Province of Alberta adopted policy 2.1.5 echoing the ideas of ministerial order #016/97. This provincially adopted policy was initiated to guide school boards in passing operational policies toward the inclusion of teacher professional growth plans at the school district level.

This portion of the policy is specifically directed toward teachers under continuous contract with permanent teaching certificates in the Province of Alberta, although the wording of the policy, directly and indirectly, includes the principal as an agent in the development and implementation of teacher professional growth plans.

The purpose of this research was to investigate professional development practices for Alberta teachers based on the inclusion of Teacher Professional Growth Plans as part of the overall professional development practices engaged in by Alberta Teachers. With the changes in policy, teachers became more accountable for their professional development and as such this study set out to determine how administrators played a role in the development of teachers' professional growth plans.

Statement of the Problem

Identification of the Problem

The major question guiding this research was developed through dialogue with colleagues, personal reading, informal research, and personal reflection. The research question is as follows: How do administrators affect the development and implementation of professional growth plans? Three additional sub-questions were addressed as well:

1. How does the perceived leadership style of principals affect the development and implementation of professional growth plans by staff members?
2. What are the best practices for administrators to use for approaching professional growth plans?
3. What are the best practices for teachers to use for approaching professional growth plans?

This study was guided, but not limited in scope, by the questions listed above. Other questions were expected to emerge from the processes of data collection and analysis and this did occur but not to the extent originally expected. During the course of this study a fourth question emerged.

4. How do principals provide support to teachers' professional development practices?

Although the above question appears similar to question number two to in the first list, the original question was meant to deal more directly with the development of the professional growth plan while the newly formulated question deals more directly with the implementation realm of professional development activities. Even though the

difference may appear insignificant in the scope, there is some indication that there may be a discrepancy between the planning for professional development and the actual implementation of the growth plans.

Definition of Terms

Assessment: a systematic process of determining the extent to which objectives are achieved. In this instance directly looking at teachers and how they perform their teaching duties. (Drake and Roe 280, 1999)

Collaboration: Work or projects undertaken by staff members in small groups who come together voluntarily and undertake new projects of mutual benefit.

Evaluation: the reflective process of gathering data through formal means and then making decisions for action. (Drake and Roe 280, 1999)

In-service: Education and training undertaken by professional and non-professional staff members while they are employed and working in a school setting.

Non-professional staff: a person employed by a school division who is not recognized as a certified teacher in Alberta.

Portfolio: A teacher initiated collection of artifacts meant to represent the teacher in a representative model for the teacher.

Pre-service: education and training undertaken by teacher prior to their professional work in the classroom.

Professional Development: an individual activity that fosters the cultivation of uniqueness and skill development. (Drake and Roe 343, 1999)

Professional staff: a person employed by a school division who is recognized as a certified teacher in Alberta.

Staff Development: a collective activity for staff in a common direction, usually related to district or school goals, vision or mission. (Drake and Roe 343, 1999)

Teacher Professional Growth Plan: A document written and submitted annually by teachers in the Province of Alberta to school based administrators or appointed individuals within a school outlining the individual's learning needs and outline of the activities proposed by the individual to achieve those learning needs.

Team work: Work or projects undertaken by groups of individuals brought together not necessarily on a voluntary basis.

Significance of the Study

This study is intended to have both theoretical and practical significance. For teachers, this study provides insights into effective ideas for the writing of their professional growth plans and also assists teachers in implementing their professional growth plans. For administrators this study provides some helpful strategies in providing assistance to teachers who may experience difficulty with the writing and implementation of growth plans and also assists principals in setting priorities with respect to professional development activities at the school level. Central office personnel will find this study useful when determining goals and directions for professional development activities at the district level.

Much available research differs widely in what is deemed important with respect to effectively promoting and maximizing professional development activities for teachers. The findings in this study provide support for the belief teachers that need to be in control of, accountable to, and responsible for their professional development practices.

Researcher Beliefs

My interest in Teacher Professional Growth Plans came out of work I have done on behalf of the Alberta Teachers' Association. As part of a corps of professional development instructors, I was assigned to deliver several sessions to various school staffs on the topic of professional growth plans. In my work at the various schools it became apparent there were wide discrepancies in how teachers were approaching the topic of professional growth plan development and implementation as well as how the administrators in the schools were able to alleviate the fears and trepidation for many staff members.

The wording of policy 2.1.5 includes the principal as an important part of the development process. It is assumed that principals play critical roles in the operation of schools and are a driving force behind changes in school operation and direction. Because of the vary nature of the wording of the policy, whereby the principals are included in policy wording, the principal is assumed to play a large part in the whole process surrounding professional growth plans.

I believe principals play a critical role in all aspects of school operation and as such I expected to find principals played a significant role and have influence in the development and implementation of Teacher Professional Growth Plans as well. The role in the development of professional growth plans was expected to come from the personal style principals adopt as they run their respective schools. The influences are expected to come from directions and expectations the principals set for the school and the teachers within the school. These directions then manifest themselves in the way teachers approach the writing of professional growth plans as well as what is included

in the submitted document. For further background information on the researcher related to personal beliefs, please refer to appendix H.

Given these beliefs several strategies were employed during the course of this research in order to insure I did not simply "discover" data supporting my own beliefs. These strategies are discussed in greater detail in chapter 3 of this thesis.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the problem to be investigated in this research as well as the purpose and significance of the study. In addition, researcher beliefs have been brought forth in this chapter. Chapter 2 will present an overview of literature on administrative leadership in schools, administrative teacher relationships and teacher professional development activities. Chapter 3 will outline the research methodologies utilized in this study including the procedures for data collection and analysis as well as limitations and delimitations of the research. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the interviews as well as emergent themes from those data. Chapter 5 presents an overview of the findings as they relate to the literature review presented in chapter 2. Finally Chapter 6 presents conclusions, recommendations and personal reflections based on the conduction of this study, the collection and analysis of data and the drawing of conclusions based on the information collected during the course of this research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

How or if principals impact Teacher Professional Growth Plan development and implementation is the primary focus of this study. Since provincial policy 2.1.5 governing professional growth plans for teachers in Alberta is relatively new, there is little in the way of recent literature written specifically about the topic of Teacher Professional Growth Plans. First a short frame of reference regarding provincial policy 2.1.5 is presented. This section is intended to provide the reader with background knowledge related to the goals of the current policy as well as some of the historical factors leading to the adoption of policy 2.1.5 in the province.

Following the section on policy, the literature presented relates to principals and their leadership roles and activities in schools. Included are subsections dealing with (a) principal leadership and style, (b) supervision and evaluation, (c) planning, (d) sharing power and promoting leadership, (e) promoting teacher growth and professional development.

Teachers and teacher activities comprise the next major section of literature presented in this chapter. Included are subsections dealing with: (a) reflection and curriculum, (b) professional development practices and strategies, (c) professional development activities, and (d) professional portfolios for teachers.

Finally a section outlining the potential use of portfolios for teachers as possible professional development tools is presented. The intent of the final section is to demonstrate how portfolios may be used as a vehicle for promoting teacher professional development activities both for and by teachers.

Policy

On May 14th, 1997, the Minister of Education directed school jurisdictions in the province of Alberta to adopt local policies reflecting the content of policy 2.1.5. (ministerial order #016/97). With the adoption of this policy teachers under continuous contract in Alberta were expected to submit an annual professional growth and development plan to the principal or designate for review. Although the provincial policy mandates teachers to submit a growth plan for annual review, the specific policies governing teacher Professional Growth Plans are contained within each school jurisdictions' collection of policies and procedures. As such these policies may vary slightly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Fenwick (2000) argues there are three reasonably distinct factors that have contributed to the adoption of the policy. The first dimension according to Fenwick is rooted in the James Keegstra case. Fenwick contends "this [court] case precipitated a provincial requirement in 1985 that school districts instate systematic written teacher evaluation policies" (p.2). Subsequent to the initiation of written teacher evaluations in the province a large study called "Toward Teacher Growth: A Study of the Impact of Alberta's Teacher Evaluation Policy" (TEPI) was undertaken (Fenwick, 2000, p. 2).

Fenwick argues the second dimension contributing to the adoption of policy 2.1.5 was that "contemporary supervision and evaluation theory has advocated a movement away from hierarchical prescriptive models" (p. 2). The suggestion is that educational practice has been moving toward the more theoretical accepted notion of having professionals control more of their own destiny in terms of professional growth and development.

The third dimension proposed by Fenwick is that policy 2.1.5 grew out of political negotiations between the Alberta Teachers' Association, and the former Alberta Education and current Alberta Learning, which had proposed teachers in the province be subject to cyclical renewals of teaching credentials. The Alberta Teachers' Association had voiced strong opposition to this proposal and embarked on a campaign to halt the adoption of this type of policy. Through various stages, the parties agreed to have policies pertaining to professional growth plans adopted. Fenwick (2000) argued that the "Alberta Teachers' Association has been generally supportive of the policy"(p. 4). Further, Fenwick adds a statement from one staff officer of the association who was quoted as saying "it was a political coup for us" (Fenwick, 2000, p. 4). With these contributing factors in mind, the focus can be turned to how Teacher Professional Growth Plans are developed and reviewed.

Typically teachers are expected to develop the professional growth plan for the school year and submit to the principal for review. Alternately the principal may designate teachers or groups of teachers to read and provide feedback for submitted professional growth plans. The policy indicates the professional growth plan may be unique to the given school year or may be part of a multi-year plan and may also include mentorship of an inexperienced teacher for the teacher submitting the plan. Although the policy calls for submission of professional growth plans near the beginning of a given school year, the policy does not directly influence the review of the plan at the end of the school year (policy 2.1.5, p. 2, 1998). Under the direction of policy 2.1.5, teachers are given latitude and personal input into the development and implementation of their professional growth plans.

A new era of professional development challenges began to unfold for school personnel with the adoption of policy 2.1.5 in Alberta (Government of Alberta, 1997). The new policy related to teacher supervision and evaluation has placed an emphasis on personal teacher accountability and responsibility. Under the new policy teachers are expected to take on a larger role in their personal growth and professional development (Fenwick 2000). Teachers are expected to develop and set goals for themselves (Government of Alberta, 1997). This new emphasis meant new expectations and challenges for teachers, which might mean rethinking professional development strategies and practices for teachers, principals and other school personnel. These new challenges brought about skepticism and fear of the unknown for some teachers. Clearly leadership in the area of professional development is needed.

The Principal

Leadership and Style

In a broad sense, the intent of professional growth plans is to assist teachers in identifying personal improvement goals and strategies. "Professional growth plans should also be used as a way for teachers to prioritize their goals and objectives" (policy 2.1.5, p. 3). With the mindset on teacher improvement, the implication for teachers is such that there will be changes in their teaching practices. Given the idea there will be expected changes to teaching practices, it is expected there may be some fear and trepidation among those that will need to change.

Given the possibility for apprehension among teachers, strong leadership is required from principals in order to assist teachers in developing and adopting professional development practices in keeping with the spirit of the newly implemented

provincial policy. Principals, by the nature of the position they hold in schools, can be a tremendous resource for teachers as schools move away from the traditional deficit model of supervision and evaluation toward a model based on knowledge, competence and accountability (Robbins & Alvy, 1995). Principals may also be able to provide direction, feedback, and advice to teachers who may have some difficulty adjusting to the requirements set forth by the new policy. (Ramsey 1999, Hoy & Miskel 1991, DuFour, 1991).

Ramsey (1999) believes providing sound leadership in the school setting is a very difficult undertaking for any individual because of the extremely complex nature of schools. Ramsey suggests several reasons for this difficulty. These include the unclear nature regarding the purposes of education, the lack of control of the students who come in the door, making decisions "in a fish bowl", working in a highly politicized environment, and working in a field where everyone believes they are an expert (p. 6).

Hoy and Miskel (1991) suggest "change and upheaval make it essential for our institutions to have anchors and guiding purposes. Leaders fulfill that need" (p. 297). Further, they add, "the success of all organizations rests on the perceived quality of leaders" (p. 297). The leadership of a principal then becomes a critical issue in the successful adoption of policy 2.1.5 at the school level.

With the new initiative of the professional growth plans facing teachers and principals, new ideas would most certainly be brought forward as teachers seek ways to adopt and embrace the mandated changes (Ramsey, 1999). Principals need to

understand the impact they may have on changes within schools as well as initiatives brought forward by staff members.

> Principals should realize the tremendous role they can play as change facilitators or obstructers. Throughout our years of research and experience, we have never seen a situation in which the principal was not a significant factor in the efforts of schools to improve. (Hall & Hord 1987 cited in Robbins & Alvy 1995, p. 66)

Further, Robbins and Alvy write: "The principal sends a clear message of support or opposition by how he or she reacts to the initial idea and facilitates or obstructs the project" (pp. 66-67). It seems very clear that the principal plays a key role in the process of development and implementation of professional growth plans. In order to bring greater understanding of how the leadership characteristics of a principal may impact professional development activities, a closer look at potential meanings and understandings of what leadership means is warranted.

Hoy and Miskel (1991), suggest effective leadership will depend not only on the person, but also on the circumstance and the context of the leadership. They write: " the concept of leadership remains elusive because it depends not only on the position, behavior and personal characteristics of the leader but also the character of the situation." (p. 253). Further they suggest "leadership is cultural and symbolic as well as instrumental and behavioral" (p. 297). The idea put forth by Hoy and Miskel is echoed by DuFour (1991). "Leadership is the process of persuasion and example by which an individual attempts to influence a group to take action that is in accord with the leader's purpose or the shared purpose of all" (1991, p. 15). It can be said effective leadership depends on the circumstance of the situation and the characteristics of the individual in the leadership role.

This idea does not suggest leadership will simply exist if one person is designated as a leader and others are designated as followers. This notion is supported by Seyfarth (1999) who contends leadership does not exist simply because there is a designated relationship existing between two individuals where one may have, by virtue of the position or title held, power over another. Leadership exists when the leader is accepted as being a leader as well as providing sound direction for the school.

Leadership, then, depends on individuals who lead as well as those who will follow. Given this notion, an assumption can be made that a relationship exists between leaders and followers and that the relationship is generally positive if the organization is going to move forward. Sergiovanni (1995), citing the work of Rost (1991), wrote "leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 139). If teachers seek administrative advice and administrators are going to provide positive influences toward professional growth plans, there must be a positive relationship existing between teachers and administrators reflecting their mutual purposes with respect to professional growth plans.

How particular principals approach their responsibilities of providing leadership within schools may be thought of as particular leadership styles. The words "leadership style" may invoke many different images in the minds of researchers and readers alike. Ramsey (1999) argues "there are about as many leadership styles as there are personality types" (p. 39). For the purposes of this discussion, the differentiation in leadership style presented is based on the arbitrary differentiation between educational leaders and managers as proposed by Ramsey (1999).

Ramsey (1999) suggests educational leaders are those principals who are effective in providing sound leadership strategies to the organization of the school as a whole. He speaks of educational leaders as those who "energize and excite the organization and the people in it by knowing what it can become" (p. 7). He also suggests managers are simply those principals who "deal with the moment" (p. 7). "Managers make do, monitor and maintain. They manage what is there without doing much to make it better" (p. 7).

The difference between educational leaders or effective principals who energize their schools and move them in positive directions is perhaps best stated by DuFour (1991) citing Bennis and Nanus, (1985) who said "managers are people who do things right, leaders are those people who do the right things" (p. 15). Although the reasoning put forward by Ramsey and DuFour citing Bennis and Nanus seems well founded in that those principals who are seen as educational leaders would more likely be seen as effective principals by those in schools. From this perspective, educational leaders would be more concerned with the infusion of enthusiasm and progress whereas managers would more likely be concerned with maintaining the status quo within the school.

However, Robbins and Alvy (1995) contend "effective principals are effective managers. As managers it is critical to display respect for every individual who contributes to the success of the school"(p. 10). This is because "any discussion on leadership can become a romantic concept if leadership is not discussed hand in hand with management" (p. 10). From the perspective of Robbins and Alvy it is essential for principals to manage the school properly so teachers have access to appropriate teaching

resources, the school facility is well maintained, and teachers are well supported in their classrooms. Robbins and Alvy argue that these are managerial functions and essential for the effective operation of a school.

Hoy and Miskel (1991) argue "there is no one best leadership style" (p. 270). In other words there is no one correct way of providing leadership to an organization. Further, Hoy and Miskel write about "situational leadership theory: The basic assumption of the theory is that leader effectiveness depends on the appropriate matching of the leader behavior with the maturity of the group or the individual" (p. 291). What is suggested is that each person has a unique leadership style and each individual needs to make the most of their particular style within the contexts of their particular organization. Further, each organization and situation requires a particular leadership style.

If individuals are to be effective in a given situation, they must read their situation carefully and adopt their leadership style to match the demands of the particular situation. The writing of Lovell and Wiles (1983) supports the notion of appropriate leadership to a particular situation and suggest in order "to be an effective leader, it is necessary to read the situation and adapt your characteristic style" (p. 72).

Clearly there are styles of leadership that work more effectively within school contexts. Ramsey argues the best approach "for school leaders today is a 'coaching' style that helps people develop their own solutions, rather than handing out expert advice" (p. 40). "The nurturing and development of subordinates is the key to organizational excellence. The secret is to give what you get, [and] manager types often don't know this. That's why many never become [true] leaders" (Ramsey, p. 50).

Although the exact definitions of leader and leadership style may seem somewhat cloudy, the results of successful leaders and their leadership within organizations such as schools are quite clear. "Successful leaders infuse value into organizations, thereby creating institutional meaning and purpose that go beyond the technical requirements of the job" (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 299). Ramsey (1999) suggests "effective leaders don't back away from holding up challenging expectations and rigid standards. They work hard to support hard work" (p. 53). Effective leadership from the principal may be a critical component in how teachers perceive their responsibilities toward professional development activities. As such, principals must be aware of their leadership characteristics and how these characteristics impact the teachers within the school as well as the characteristics of the situation they are in (Lovell & Wiles, 1983).

Supervision and Evaluation

Supervision and evaluation exist in order to assist with instructional improvement efforts on the part of teachers and principals (DuFour, 1991). The goal of supervision and evaluation should be to assist teachers in identification of potential areas for self-improvement as well as provide some avenues to bring that improvement about. The long-term goal as suggested by Lovell and Wiles (1983) is such that "supervision exists to improve instruction which, in turn, will enhance the probability that the goals of student learning will be achieved" (p. 114).

Dufour (1991) argues "staff development and teacher observation/ assessment have been regarded as separate processes in most schools" (p. 73). Teachers typically associate observation/assessment models with teacher evaluation and often [teachers]

do not perceive the process as helpful (Wise & Darling - Hammond, 1985). However it is argued, if principals utilize the assumptions and the processes of clinical supervision as the basis of their procedures for observation/assessment, it is possible that those procedures can both complement and supplement a staff development program (DuFour, 1991).

If the intent of supervision is to improve instruction, there must be changes made in the way supervision is carried out. Glatthorn (1984) argues "there is no conclusive evidence that clinical supervision improves the performance of competent, experienced teachers" (p. 3). In order for staff development activities to be complemented and strengthened by supervisory activities, Sergiovanni (1995) argues principals and teachers must develop a positive view of supervision and deal away with "the negative stereotypes of supervision emerging from its history of hierarchy, dominance, and control" (p. 213).

Sergiovanni (1995) argues "teacher development and supervision go hand in hand" (p. 212). He argues the processes of supervision and professional development are inextricably tied together and that principals "have a responsibility to help teachers improve their practice and hold them accountable for meeting their commitments to teaching and learning" (p. 212). Further, Sergiovanni adds "done well, supervision enhances teacher development" (p. 212).

Ramsey (1999) suggests "meaningful evaluations give candid feedback, pinpoint areas for improvement, reinforce good work and nail down strategies for remedying weaknesses and building strengths" (p. 53). This idea, if used appropriately during the time of professional growth plan review, can become an avenue for principals and

teachers can communicate about targeted areas for professional development activities. In order for this to be an effective strategy in the area of professional development, Robbins and Alvy (1995) suggest "principals should develop an honest, caring and trustful relationship with teachers" (p. 100).

It is important for principals to individualize their supervisory activities with each teacher as much as possible. Glatthorn (1984) suggests that principals need to differentiate their supervisory modes based on the particular needs of the teacher in question. Supervision needs to be catered to the specific learning needs of the individual teacher rather than treating all teachers the same way. This allows teachers the freedom to choose what sorts of supervision they feel most comfortable with and he also suggests this supervisory role is better suited and will ultimately assist and promote growth in the teacher (pp. 2 - 5).

Teachers and principals need to work closely together in order to insure the goal of instructional improvement remains at the center of evaluation and supervision (Ramesy, 1999). The annual review of Teacher Professional Growth Plans lends itself to providing the opportunity for teachers and administrators to discuss issues related to classroom instruction as well as formulate plans for instructional improvement for the given teacher (Robbins & Alvy, 1995, p. 99). The annual review of the professional growth plan also provides principals and teachers opportunities to engage in supervisory and evaluative activities in a less formal, more collegial atmosphere than traditional approaches previously employed.

Planning

Principals are at the forefront of providing direction and giving meaning to the educational programming within the school. As such principals must be involved in the planning for and adoption of educational change (Robbins & Alvy, 1995, p. 66). As Ramsey (1999) suggests, "successful school leadership is never random, It is purposeful by nature and that requires planning" (p. 26). This is, however, not to say the principal must exclusively be entrusted with the responsibility of providing the leadership for change. Nor should principals isolate themselves in an environment where they are entirely responsible for the decision making surrounding change within schools. These changes range from the implementation of new curricula in the school to adoption and promotion of new and varied teaching practices among staff members. The school, therefore school maybe looked upon as a community where all individuals in the school are interdependent on one another. Robbins and Avly posit "the school is a community of learners and that all can learn from one another" (p. 25).

The goal of professional development is to facilitate instructional and self-improvement among teachers. Lovell and Wiles propose "improvement implies change" (1983, p. 114). If change is brought about in any organization effectively, it must be planned for rather than brought about haphazardly. Planning requires leadership on the part of administrators and teachers alike. Ramsey (1999) contends "successful school leadership is never random. It is purposeful by nature and that requires planning" (p. 26). If teachers and principals are to be effective in their efforts to improve themselves through professional development activities they must strive to

be well planned in order to affect change, not suggesting all learning will necessarily emerge from planned activities but suggesting planning for the incorporation of professional development activities can lead to greater benefits from specific professional development activities.

DuFour (1991) states that "principals who hope to function as staff developers will recognize that the best opportunities for professional growth often occur in small groups or individual settings" (p. 73). With this in mind principals and teachers need to analyze their time schedules and try to facilitate the gathering of small professional development oriented groups. This idea is not meant to suggest that all teachers will learn effectively in small group setting and DuFour provides some words of caution. "While being attentive to providing quality group programs when appropriate, they [the principals] must also take advantage of the opportunity to promote professional growth one teacher at a time" (p. 73).

Further to this argument, related to bring teachers together in small group settings, principals should be aware of the suggestion made by Robbins and Alvy (1995). They contend if professional development activities are to become a regular part of the working day for teachers, "we must also find imaginative ways of separating adults from youngsters at times during the school day for conversation, brain storming, reflection and replenishment" (p. 7).

In addition to providing structures where teachers may get together in small groups in order to hold discussion, principals have an obligation to teachers in that they must make provisions so that resources are available for teachers in the classroom. "Principals must help to maximize the availability of sufficient high quality classroom

supplies and instructional resources to enable teachers to focus their attention on instructional and curricular resources" (Robbins & Alvy, 1995, p. 11). Provision of resources requires planning and preparation on the part of all individuals concerned; however, most planning and preparation directly involves the principal because they are ultimately responsible for the school budget.

Sharing Power and Promoting Leadership

Not only do principals need to provide leadership within schools, they also need to promote leadership within staff members. Lovell and Wiles (1983) argue "official leaders should not only seek to influence the behavior of followers, but should also attempt to release the leadership behavior of followers in planning and implementing action for educational improvement" (p. 79). This promotion of leadership among staff serves to include teacher voices in the decision making process as well as gives staff members a genuine sense that their opinions matter with respect to the direction of a school.

The idea behind promoting leadership within members of a school staff serves to promote new ideas for sharing from within the staff rather than having the ideas for directional changes dictated to staff members. As Dufour (1991) writes

> Principals should be particularly attentive to the important task of identifying and supporting champions - zealous advocates who are willing to become personally committed to the success of an idea. The eventual outcome of an eager innovation depends more on the advocacy of an eager champion than the passive acquiescence of the many. Teacher compliance with programs and practices which are imposed upon them is likely to last only as long as an administrator is there to monitor and supervise. Changes which emanate from teachers, on the other hand, last until thy find a better way. Furthermore, if a teacher initiates a change and demonstrates its effectiveness, it is likely that his or her colleagues will soon follow. (p. 91)

The critical component in bringing forth ideas from staff members appears to be based on the power with approach as presented by Lovell and Wiles (1983). They suggest "the power with approach to supervisory leadership is based on the assumption that followers have the potential for thinking, being creative, acting with maturity, and accepting responsibility" (p. 79). Under this approach to leadership, "leaders are not concerned with getting and maintaining personal authority. Their chief purpose is to develop group power that will enable staff to accomplish its goals" (p. 80). Principals must encourage staff members to participate in setting directions for the educational programming within the school. As such, principals will then promote collaborative ideas and behaviors among staff members and eventually these behaviors will spill over into the realm of professional development activities and practices.

Promoting Growth and Professional Development

It has been argued that professional development practices in schools are not serving the needs of teachers effectively. DuFour (1991) wrote " a nationwide study of schooling practices (Goodlad, 1983) concluded that the staff development efforts of most school districts can be characterized as fragmented and unfocused, lacking clear priorities, common commitment, or school wide emphasis" (p. 57). Principals and teachers alike need to work diligently at improving this situation and must work together in order to provide themselves with the most effective professional development activities possible.

If staff development activities are to provide all staff members with opportunities for professional growth and are to be effective, the principal needs to become part of the professional development community within the school. Robbins

and Alvy (1995) posit "the principal must play a role in the development of staff members' teaching skills and strategies" (p. 103). They suggest the way a "principal can model life long learning is by continuing to participate in the development and demonstration of effective teaching practices" (Robbins & Alvy, 1995, p. 3). Further they suggest it is important for principals to demonstrate they, too, are learners within the school environment. They can demonstrate the importance of continued learning for teachers and principals alike by "participating in staff development sessions" (1995, p. 5).

There are high expectations placed on teachers with respect to continued professional development. How principals treat teachers and provide support to teachers may be an essential component of effective professional development practice. DuFour (1991) suggests "treating teachers as professionals is at the very heart of the issue of creating a school climate conducive to staff development (p. 31). Further, DuFour provides an explanation as to what professionalism means for the realm of education. "Professionalism suggests a high level of knowledge and skill, status commensurate with that skill, and, most importantly, the opportunity to exercise one's own judgement" (p. 31).

Ramsey (1999) believes principals must provide a tremendous amount of support to teachers including the provision of resources and materials. "Staff members need to know that the administration believes in them and stands ready to marshal all available resources to help them succeed. Once they are convinced they will give it their best" (p. 50).

Maximizing professional development opportunities is a great challenge for principals and teachers alike. Principals and teachers need to develop excellent teamwork skills in order to maximize their benefits from professional development activities. This may be accomplished through the use of small teams. Ramsey (1999) suggests "more and more school leaders are finding that teaming is a powerful key to improved morale and increased productivity. For too long, teaching has been an isolated profession" (p. 45). This belief echoes the work of Dufour (1991) who wrote

> the use of small teams promotes collaborations, helps to build consensus and allows for the development of leadership potential of a large number of teachers. In short, the use of small teams is an excellent means of encouraging the collaboration which fosters a productive climate for effective staff development. Principals can also promote a spirit of collaboration through their own dealings with staff members. (p. 37)

However, Ramsey (1999) provides some words of caution with respect to the use of small teams in the school setting. "Teams are not a panacea or a cure all. Teams of classroom teachers should be formed only when doing so benefits students, not for the convenience of adults" (p. 46). As with many proposed solutions to educational issues, some may tend to look at teaming as a cure-all for professional development issues within schools. "Teaming does not deliver miracles, but it is an effective way to multiply individual strengths, pool talents and get more out of existing staff" (Ramsey, 1999, p. 47).

Ultimately, the goal of professional growth plans is to bring about changes in teachers and their teaching practices for the benefit of the students in their charge. In order to derive maximal benefit from the input of administration to the professional

growth plan, there must exist a good working relationship between the individual teacher and the administrator.

Teachers

Reflection

It is argued that reflection is an essential component of professional practice for teachers. Sergiovanni (1995) argues reflection needs to be part of individuals' teaching craft. "The ability of an artisan is the ability to reflect on practice" (1995, p. 35). In reflecting on their practice, it is argued "reflective professionals become students of their practice. They research the context and experiment with different courses of action" (Sergiovanni, 1995, pp. 32 - 33).

Schön (1987) suggests there are two distinct types of reflective practice individuals can engage in. The first type is termed reflection-on-action. The practitioner reflects on their activities after and outside of the context of the specific activities being reflected upon. The second type of reflection is termed reflection-in-action whereby the practitioner reflects and adjusts practice while in action. Schön suggests both types of reflection are necessary for the practitioner to properly engage in appropriate reflective practice. (p. 2)

Although reflective practice seems essential for continued professional development, Brookfield (1995) argues teachers are not in a good position to become reflective practitioners. Brookfield contends that the benefits of being critically reflective are of "limited value unless we have a specific focus on how it actually happens" (p. 28). The idea put forth by Brookfield is that teachers must be willing to include other teachers and administrators in the process of reflection in order for that

reflection to be truly effective. Brookfield argues that practitioners know themselves too well and as such will have difficulty separating themselves from their reflection. As a result, it is essential for practitioners to develop honest and opened relationships with others in order to assist themselves in effective reflective practice.

An essential starting point for teachers to begin reflecting on in order to prepare for professional development activities is within curriculum. With a sound understanding of the curriculum, the teacher can then move forward to reflect upon teaching practices and needs as an educator in developing their professional growth plans for a given year. Although reflection may be the starting point, it is essential teachers take the information they gather through the process of reflection and use this information to improve their professional practice.

Professional Development

Those involved in educating children often say the educational system needs to promote life-long learning among students so when these students leave school, their interest in learning and self-betterment does not change. Alberta Learning (1997) has included statements to this effect in Ministerial Order #016/97 whereby teachers are referred to as "career long learners" (p.7). Teachers and principals need to take this message to heart when they look at themselves as potential role models for students in this respect. Robbins and Alvy (1995) contend "our vision of lifelong learning for students can hold greater meaning if teachers and administrators also have an ongoing conversation to improve their talents and skills" (p. 99). The challenge for administrators and teachers is to move the philosophical statement of professing life-long learning into the practice of continued professional development.

There are many approaches teachers may take toward professional development activities. Each approach is highly dependent on teachers, their particular needs, and the specific context in which they operate (Glatthorn, 1984). In some cases, in particular with inexperienced teachers, a directed approach by administrators may be more valuable for the teacher. "Successful experienced teachers on the other hand may prefer reflective listening and coaching as opposed to directive support" (Robbins & Alvy, 1995, p. 45).

DuFour (1991) argues "effective staff development programs make use of available knowledge basis" (p. 57); they are grounded in available literature and supported by current research. With professional development grounded in current knowledge, there may be a temptation to limit the professional development activities to areas based in academic growth. Lovell and Wiles (1983) argue against this case and contend "staff development programs should not be confined to experiences that promote only academic growth" (p. 189).

Given that professional development programs should promote a wide variety of learning among individuals, the focus of professional development must remain such that individual professional development needs and goals remain the central focus of the program. Lovell and Wiles (1983) contend "a fundamental part of any staff development program is the effort of each staff member to direct, implement, and evaluate his or her own program of self-improvement" (p. 200). With the individual as the central focus of the program it is essential for individuals to be accountable for their learning and the outcomes of the professional development program. "The individual must accept responsibility for the outcomes of the program. The organization must

provide the opportunity that includes time, technical support and psychological encouragement" (Lovell and Wiles, 1983, p. 189).

> The ultimate goal of training programs is not to create individuals who unthinkingly follow a cookbook approach to teaching, but to develop thoughtful professionals who have the ability to assess and revise their own actions in order to improve the likelihood of success for their students. Challenging teachers to discuss the whys and hows of what they do is the most effective means of developing their ability to think abstractly. Staff development programs should be designed to ensure that this discussion takes place on a daily basis. (DuFour, 1991, p. 57)

Portfolios

As professional development moves into the realm of continuous and ongoing processes it is suggested portfolios can be used "as a tool to advance professional growth" (Wolf, 1996, p. 34). Andrejko (1998, p. 46) suggests there are five, not necessarily discrete, areas contained within effective portfolios. These areas are: (a) articulation of goals, (b) ways of implementing those goals, (c) log of professional development activities, (d) evidence, and (e) reflection. Dietz (1995) explains the details in a slightly different fashion suggesting portfolios "provide teachers with a framework for initiating, planning and facilitating their professional development while building connections between their professional goals and the goals of the school" (p. 41). Wolf (1991) further supports this proposition suggesting "portfolios provide a connection to the contexts and personal histories of real teaching and make it possible to document the unfolding of both teaching and learning over time" (1991 p. 37).

Portfolios can be viewed as valuable tools in the professional development of teachers. Wolf does provide some words of caution and suggests great care be taken in the development of the portfolio. "If the portfolio task is too open ended or ill defined, it can turn into a paper chase" (Wolf, 1991, p. 38). Clearly the portfolio can provide

teachers with direction and assistance in their professional development activities. Portfolios are but one tool available to teachers in their professional development undertakings. Portfolios, if adopted properly, can serve as a catalyst for the reflection, planning, implementation of plans and the gathering of evidence during professional development activities

Summary

Based on the literature, the principal can be seen as a critical agent to the successful implementation of the ideas around teacher professional growth plans within the school. The principal also appears to influence the benefit teachers will derive from the professional development activities they participate in. Robbins and Alvy (1999) suggest it is the duty of the principal to insure teachers are able to benefit from professional development activities. "It is our responsibility to expose teachers to a variety of useful, relevant instructional ideas. Principals can serve as facilitators. In this role they can foster teachers' reflective practices to assist them in the analysis of their teaching" (p. 105).

It seems clear, leaders, both official an unofficial, within schools provide personnel within those same schools a sense of direction for the school as a whole. Leader support for initiatives and the ability to shape school culture to one of support and mutual understanding is critical. Also critical is school leadership in the shaping of professional development communities. Robbins and Alvy (1995) suggest , "the culture [of the school] should emphasize that the school is a community of learners and that all can learn from one another" (p. 25). They also suggest the principal plays a critical role in the shaping of school culture related to educational change. "Principals can

contribute to educational change as they are acutely involved in the culture and structure of the school" (Robbins & Alvy, 1995, p. 66).

What seems important for leaders is to match their abilities to the needs and direction of the organization. Effective principals need to be concerned about the needs of the group and develop and support ways of moving the group forward to responsible meaningful professional development activities.

CHAPTER 3

Method

This study was designed to gather information from teachers and principals as to how school principals might affect the development and implementation of teacher professional growth plans. The approach used in collecting information for this study was consistent with qualitative research methods and, as such, the breadth of the study is limited in scope but the depth of information gathered is great. This chapter provides a detailed account of the methods utilized while initiating questions, gathering data during interviews and subsequently analyzing the interview transcripts. The processes of design and respondent selection are provided as well.

Descriptions of the schools and the participants are provided in this chapter to give the reader a sense of the schools, the teaching staff and the communities each school serves. Pseudonyms are used in the place of the respondents' actual names to protect the confidentiality of the respondents and their schools.

Respondent Group

The potential respondent group for this study was principals and teachers employed under continuous contract in the Province of Alberta. Prospective respondents were sought after several discussions with current and former colleagues as well as my research supervisor. The intent of these discussions was to identify an accessible population of respondents who had some experience with professional growth plans as well as those who might provide relatively easy access to interview times. Volunteer principals and teachers from two school districts in the vicinity of a major western Canadian city area made up the accessible respondent group.

Superintendents of the school districts in question were contacted to seek permission to conduct the study in their respective school divisions as well as to obtain permission to initiate contact with the principals in the various schools. Once written permission was received from each superintendent, the principals were contacted via telephone at which time they were provided with a brief description of the nature of the study and the time frame necessary to complete the collection of data. Once principals had agreed to participate in the study, a form letter was sent for distribution to the various schools and those individuals on staff who indicated they were willing to participate were given notification of the dates and times for the interviews.

Ten respondents made up the sample in this study. The sample is broken down as follows. From one school district, one principal and two staff members from each of two schools for a total of six respondents. From the second school district one principal and three staff members from the same school were interviewed. Teachers from elementary grades through to high school were interviewed. The teachers' classroom experience ranged from less than five to more than twenty-five years. All principals had more than 15 years of experience in the educational system.

School Divisions, Schools, and Respondent Profiles

Crooked River School Division

Crooked River School Division is primarily a rural school division on the borders of a major Western Canadian city. There are slightly more than 5000 students who attend the various schools in the division with the bulk of the students coming from agricultural or small community backgrounds. There are many families residing within the boundaries of this school division living in an upscale development on the edge of

the city; however, the bulk of this school division is composed of middle and lower income families.

Wild Rose School. The community Wild Rose school serves was described by the principal and the teacher respondents as very stable. The principal indicated many of the parents who resided in the area also had attended this particular school themselves at some point and were very proud of the school. A substantial number of students attending this school, approximately two-thirds, were from Catholic families.

The majority of students who attended this school were from an agricultural background. Another substantial number of students came from an acreage development surrounding a Hamlet. These students were primarily from low to middle income families. In addition to these students, approximately 10 percent of the students who attended Wild Rose resided on a nearby First Nations reservation but had chosen not to attend their Band school. Wild Rose School is a kindergarten through grade 9 school with 30 to 40 staff members including professional and non-professional personnel.

The school is located less than a one-hour drive from the outskirts of a major western Canadian city in a productive farming area. There are approximately 500 students attending the school, who are relatively evenly distributed across the grade levels in this school. The school facility is located on the edge of a small rural community with all students arriving at school either via the school bus or parental rides.

Harold is the principal of Wild Rose school and has been an administrator in this school division for more than 10 years. In this particular school this is Harold's first

year as an administrator. Previously worked at this school as a teacher when he began his teaching career more than 15 years ago with some of the same teachers he was now principal of. His experience includes a variety of educational and leadership roles ranging from Junior high school teaching and administration to senior high school administration as well as central office administration. He holds a Bachelor of Education degree and was in the midst of completing a master's degree.

Fern is a professional staff member who has taught for most of her career at this particular school. She has more than 25 years of teaching experience at both the elementary and junior high school levels. Fern holds a Bachelor of Education degree. She has taken many courses over her career at the post secondary level but none were directed at completing a degree beyond the bachelor's degree. At the end of this school year Fern will retire from teaching.

Karen has more than 15 years of teaching experience at the lower elementary grades with this school division and also has done most of her teaching at this school. Karen holds a Bachelor of Education degree and has also taken numerous courses at the post secondary level in an effort to pursue personal interests in the area of technology integration into the classroom.

Aurora School. Aurora school is an alternative school with two campuses located within the boundaries of this school division. The principal of this school described the communities these schools serve in very different terms, although both of the campuses are located within primary business and retail districts of their respective communities. The school came into existence as a possible way of trying to retain some of the high school aged students who were dropping out of school as well as re-

integrating those students who had left school and now wanted to return to the educational system. Less than ten professional and non-professional staff members are employed at the two campuses.

James is a first year principal and has been given the responsibility of administering the two campuses coupled with various central office responsibilities. His experience of more than 15 years has been gained as teacher and administrator of a very large high school within this school division. James holds a Bachelor of Education degree and a Master's degree in administration.

Violet is a professional staff member at one campus of this particular school with approximately five years of teaching experience. She has gained experience teaching at the junior high and high school levels in small rural communities as well as large urban schools. Primarily her experience has been in the traditional school environment. Violet holds a Bachelor of Education degree. One of Violet's interests is in "on-line instruction". As such she was contemplating enrolling in a masters program in order to study on-line teaching and learning.

Janet is a professional staff member at the other campus of this school with approximately five years of teaching experience who has only taught within the realm of the alternative styled school. Janet has more than fifteen years of experience in the private business sector. This experience was in the realm of sales and management. Janet holds a Bachelor of Education degree. Although Janet and Violet do not work together at the same campus, it was evident from the interviews conducted with both participants that they worked very closely together on a number of collaborative projects.

Flatbush School Division

Flatbush School Division also borders the same large Western Canadian city as Crooked River School Division. A more urbanized population characterizes this school division although a large portion of the families in this school division have a rural background. Two larger communities make up the urban base of this school division with the balance of the population living in rural or semi-rural areas. There are approximately 10,000 students who attend the various schools within this division.

Hill View School. Hill view school serves primarily students from families living in the acreage developments surrounding the school with a small number residing on nearby farms. There are approximately 550 students attending this school from kindergarten through grade nine. There are between 40 and 50 professional and non-professional staff members.

Kevin is the principal of Hill View School and has been principal of this school for 13 years. All of his more than 20 years of experience in the educational system have been with this school division. Kevin holds a Bachelor of Education degree and a Master's degree.

Donald is a teacher who has more than 25 years of educational experience. Donald has worked for a large urban school division as well as this particular division. His primary teaching assignment is grade three with some responsibilities in the area of elementary music education.

Darwin is a teacher who and has approximately 15 years of teaching experience. Most of his teaching experience has been at the lower elementary levels primarily at grade 2. He taught in a very remote portion of the province as well as overseas for a

time. He holds a Bachelor of Education degree and recently completed his Master's degree in elementary education.

Marge is a teacher who has more than 15 years of teaching experience at the elementary level with most of her experience at this particular school. All of her teaching experience has been with this school division. Her teaching assignment was primarily grade six with some responsibility for music instruction to upper elementary grades as well. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree. Marge has taken many courses and in-service sessions over her career but has not formally entered a program beyond that of the Bachelor's degree.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for this study came from semi-structured interviews with (a) principals and (b) teachers. The interviews were conducted utilizing the questions with the principals and teachers as attached in appendix E and appendix F respectively. Interviews with principals preceded those conducted with staff members in all cases. This ordering of interviews was arranged independently by each of the principals when convenient dates and times were agreed upon. A semi-structured interview approach was utilized in order to elicit as much information as possible related to the topic of interest, yet allow for participants to expand and clarify their views beyond any limitations posed by the interview questions (see Appendices E and F for interview schedules). Most interviews were conducted in quiet areas whereby the staff members were free from distractions of the school function and able to answer questions without interruption. One interview was conducted in my home and another was conducted in the home of the respondent. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete.

Interview schedules were constructed in the months prior to the actual conduction of the interviews. The original interview schedules were loosely based on the initial literature review submitted as part of the research proposal and personal interest. Questions were refined with the assistance of classmates, colleagues, my research supervisor and the respondents in the pilot study. The first section of questions dealt with educational experience and current teaching or administrative placements. The middle section, for both the principal and teachers, dealt with perceptions about the principal's style and the last section of questions dealt specifically with the issue of professional growth plans from the perspective of the principal and the teacher. All interviews were conducted between February 1, 2000 and April 15, 2000.

Prior to conducting the interviews, respondents were asked to give their consent to recording the interviews (A sample copy of the consent form is included as Appendix D). In addition to the audio recordings, notes were taken during the interview process in order to verify the respondents' answers and to help minimize my biases brought into the interviews. Upon completion of the interviews, the conversations were transcribed and summarized. A summary of the interview interpretations was provided to each respondent in written format for verification. No revisions to the interpretations provided to the respondents were requested.

Data Analyses

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and thematically coded, guided initially by personal thoughts and notes taken during the interview process. Emergent themes were then revised and categorized to reflect the literature and ideas gathered during the course of research. As the categorization of the data progressed, the

literature review of the previous chapter was also revised in order to explore the literary base of some of the emergent ideas brought forward during the course of the research.

The data collected represents the processes and procedures followed in three schools by a limited number of individuals. For the purposes of this study I have drawn upon the words of Sparks and Hirsch (1997) and not provided a clear distinction between professional development and staff development during the interview process. In not providing a distinction to the respondents during the interview process and not using a distinction during the coding, I believe a wider range of professional development activities was explored.

Trustworthiness

Throughout the course of the research I kept a journal in which I recorded personal reflections about the process. Ideas from these reflections gave insights into subsequent interviews as well as question refinement and data analysis. Although the primary source of data was the semi-structured interview, notes from the research journal were also referred to from time to time.

Interestingly, colleagues from university courses who read and reviewed the transcripts also coded the data with strikingly similar themes. Data analysis and interview guide refinement were concurrent with data collection during the course of this research. Interview questions were modified to reflect emergent ideas from the interviews, as well as suggestions made by respondents, colleagues and my research supervisor. Personal beliefs, emerging themes, and the literature review provide structure for the reporting of data.

Delimitations

This study only took into consideration teachers who are employed under continuous contract with their respective school boards as the policy directed at Teacher Professional Growth Plans primarily concerns teachers who are employed under continuous contracts. Although beginning teachers may be required to submit professional growth plans based on their employing boards' policies, the interest in this study was not with inexperienced teachers and thus they were excluded from the potential respondent group. Teachers who are not under continuous contract are supervised and evaluated in a slightly different manner and as such were not considered as part of the potential respondent group for this study.

The findings of this study are delimited by the discussions I had with 10 experienced educators surrounding the western Canadian city. Personal ease of access to the respondents was one motivator for delimiting the research to this area. The second motivator was that the potential respondents had already been exposed to the new policy and therefore the policy was not entirely new to any respondent. The range of experience varied from a few years to more than twenty. The limited number of respondents in this study allowed for in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the participants.

Limitations

The provincial government set the school year 1999 - 2000 as the year in which school boards in the province were mandated to have in place a locally developed policy with respect to Teacher Professional Growth Plans. The two school boards represented in this study had each adopted local policy governing Teacher Professional

Growth Plans two years prior to the provincially mandated deadline. Thus teachers and principals in this study already had some experience with professional growth plans and as such had likely moved beyond the initial stages of making sense of the new policies and more likely refining their approaches to professional growth plan development and implementation.

The findings are limited by the willingness of the participants to share pertinent information with me as guided by the interview schedules. It is also limited by their willingness to answer questions freely within the given nature of the questions. And finally research is also limited by the fact I have a professional working relationship with 4 of the respondents and as such, their willingness to share information may be limited by historical contact and possible expectations of the research from their point of view as well as my own.

In two of the three circumstances, the interviews were conducted on fairly typical school days in so far as there were no signs of anything out of the ordinary during my time in the school. During the conduction of interviews at Hill View school, however an announcement had been made with regard to the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) program in that some of the teachers from this school had submitted proposals to access some of the funding directed toward this school district. During the course of the interview with the principal, I was informed some of the proposals from this school had been rejected and he would have to break the news to the teachers involved. As I conducted the interviews with the teacher respondents I noticed the principal talking to some teachers in his office and their body language suggested

they were the individuals who had submitted the proposal which had been denied and were obviously in some distress about the news.

Since I know and have worked with a number of the participants in this study, their responses to the questions may have been tempered by our previous working relationship. It is possible our working relationship may have placed undue pressure on some of the participants to articulate their answers clearly and precisely. Furthermore, as a result of our familiarity, many parts of the conversation may have been perceived to be understood yet remained unspoken or unexplained. I trust assurances of confidentiality will have alleviated any pressures, real or imagined, any of the participants may have felt. I undertook a member check with all of the participants and none have requested any changes to my interpretations of their interviews and I am confident my interpretations reflect their beliefs with respect to the interview questions. Attention is drawn to appendix H in reference to the background of the researcher.

Summary

This naturalistic study focused on the understandings and interpretations of three principals and seven teachers working in various schools in the area of a major western Canadian city. Individual participants in this study were selected from those indicating a desire to participate in the study. Great care was taken to collect the data as given by the participants and analyze the transcripts in order to obtain as much relevant information as possible from this study.

Several others scrutinized the transcripts for emergent themes and patterns during this process in an effort to alleviate researcher biases. As another check on the emergent themes, summaries of the data collected were mailed to respondents and they

were asked to provide any corrections, additions or deletions to the information I had gathered during the course of this study. None of the respondents had requested any changes to their findings and as such the findings are reported as gathered and interpreted. The findings of this study are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Chapter 4 presents analysis of the findings from the ten interviews collected during this study. The analysis is presented in two distinct parts. First, the findings from each school are presented in the order in which interviews were conducted. Secondly, the findings are synthesized into themes based upon interpretations of the data.

This chapter is intended to provide an understanding of how principals can and do impact the process of Teacher Professional Growth Plan development and implementation. Within the realm of professional growth plan development, strategies the teachers employed for the development and revision of professional growth plans are presented. In the context of professional growth plan implementation, strategies and activities individuals undertook are discussed in light of the perceived benefit to the individual.

Wild Rose School

Professional Growth Plan Development

Professional development activities may be viewed as part of the professional obligations for teachers in the province of Alberta. In the eyes of Wild Rose School's principal, professional development needs to be part of the on going professional practices of teachers and school administrators. He believed on going professional development is but one critical component insuring effective instruction takes place

within the classroom. As professional development activities must be included in the ongoing activities of professional personnel. He said:

> I expect that staff members are professionals. We like to use that word a lot when we talk about ourselves as teachers. If we are indeed professionals, we know that professionals plan for themselves, professionals reflect upon their own actions, professionals look for improvement, and for ways to improve and professionals evaluate [themselves]. Those are things that professionals do. And if you follow that cycle through all of the time, then while you are doing things and sometimes its very informal: What am I doing? Is it effective? Are there ways I could change it? Are there ways I could improve it? What do I need to do to improve it, to change it? Is what I am doing to change it being effective? And then you start all over again.

Although the direction from provincial policy seems quite clear as to the requirement to develop and submit a professional growth plan for annual review, there was some disagreement among the respondents from this school as to the necessity of formally writing and submitting an annual growth plan for review. When asked about how she approached the notion of professional growth plans, Karen explicitly stated "I need to write them [professional growth plans] down. I need to write them up and to turn them in to the principal." Karen believed the professional growth plan is a way of "identifying areas you may need to improve in and formalizing these ideas." She also believed professional growth plans have helped her "improve teaching practices".

Fern, however, disagreed with Karen's statement about the necessity to formalize the professional growth plan into a written document for review by the principal. She believed, through her position in the school as well as the necessity to keep an open mind toward professional development opportunities and activities, she

did not need to write her plan in order to be able to grow professionally. During the interview she said:

> I find them [professional growth plans] kind of superfluous because you are growing all of the time and maybe that is a notion because of where I work in this school. I [also] work with the lead teachers in the division as well as with the 25 teachers here. I grow because every day I encounter somebody with some new suggestion. I have not gotten around to writing it [the growth plan] down. I am doing it, I haven't been writing it.

This approach suggests a haphazard approach to professional development. This approach seems to be one with no direction or plan. This individual appears only to react to what other teachers have to say or need rather than having their own plan.

In some respects Harold supported and echoed the sentiment of Fern because he noted one of his primary concerns is of the absolute necessity for effective instruction to be taking place within the classroom. Harold was asked what approaches he might take if a teacher refused to participate in the writing of professional growth plans and subsequently refused to participate in professional development activities. He suggested some teachers might not be entirely willing to let go of the ways in which they had accomplished teaching tasks in the past. He said:

> It may take one individual very little time to be willing to let go of something in order to make a change or to develop something or to grow compared to the next individual who says I cannot do that yet and I am not ready to do that yet. I need to hang on to what I have got. We have to honor that to some degree. If the students are learning and there is effective instruction in the classroom, I can be more tolerant of a teacher who chooses not to change so rapidly or not to involve themselves in a variety of professional development activities to the same extent someone else does. Where it becomes problematic is where there is not effective learning going on in the classroom.

Although the two teachers interviewed differed in their views regarding the formalization of the professional growth plan into a written document, they agreed the process of developing ideas for their own professional development was primarily driven by their practices in relation to delivery of sound educational programming to students. It is evident the principal can impact the process of professional growth plan development. This impact is felt through support, coaching and possible directions as teachers seek meaningful and relevant professional growth activities to include as part of their professional growth plans.

Fern suggested the principal could be seen as someone who encourages people to expand their teaching routines and take risks beyond what they might feel comfortable with. She noted the area of technology in particular as one where teachers could and should be encouraged to grow as more and more curricular outcomes become technology oriented. Karen stated "he has given me lots of support. He has given me ideas of where to go in that I have taken part in something called the technology mentorship program."

Both Karen and Fern agreed, their principal, Harold, was supportive of their professional growth initiatives. Fern believed the principal was "extremely supportive of what I do." Fern also believed Harold gives teachers a great deal of responsibility and self-direction in that "he lets good teachers be good teachers." Karen echoed this statement and believed Harold has faith in teachers being able to do a good job.

Harold suggested, as principal, his role in the development of growth plans could be dictated by factors including the teaching experience of the teacher. Harold compared his possible role in the development of a professional growth plan for experienced teachers verses the development of a professional growth plan for relatively inexperienced teachers. He suggested there are varying degrees to how much or how little he would participate in the development of professional growth plans. For those teachers who are less experienced, he might have more influence about what went in to the professional growth plan.

> There may be much more direction with a first year teacher. When you know a whole bunch more than they do and they have no experience other than their university training, you may need to give them lots of direction and lots of help. Still allowing them to have control of the plan or what they are going to do but you may need to give them lots of input.

This idea of becoming more directive with teachers also applies to those teachers who may be experiencing difficulties within the classroom and as such he might be more directive with a teacher in that particular situation. Even though he may be providing more direction to the teacher, he also believes it is ultimately the teacher who must decide about what will or will not be done in terms of their professional growth activities.

> In those cases it becomes a more directive approach. And that is simply what it becomes. Again, there are stages from here is a suggestion, this is what I would like you to consider.... For example, using the professional growth objective forms. On the one side with those that where its is their plan, they do the whole thing and it works wonderfully. With the teacher who is perhaps not so effective, it may involve, and not necessarily doing a whole bunch of PD, it may involve things like saying "look at are the things that are occurring and you need to come to some plan in terms of how to resolve those issues. Now you get to choose what PD you want and you get to choose the route that you want to do

> this, but in the end you need to get to this stage." And you can begin with that. Or you can, and in some cases you may have to go to the very end and say this is the result that will occur. This is how you will get to this result. This is when you will do it. And it is very clearly that you lay it out. Now typically, that will happen one in a thousand times.

Harold did express a note of angst with respect to his role in the supervision of teachers and the possibility of providing advice and direction to teachers who worked in areas where he had no previous teaching experience or their teaching area was outside the realm of his expertise. He said: " There are other circumstances where I am supervising teachers who have far more experience and knowledge than I do in areas that I know nothing about." Given this scenario, it may be useful to include groups of teachers in the process as well.

Professional Growth Plan Implementation

The three respondents from Wild Rose School agreed there is a need for teachers to participate in a variety of professional development activities throughout the school year as a way to encourage and sustain professional growth among staff. Although they agreed with the necessity to engage in professional growth, they suggested the primary reason to engage in professional growth and development activities was not simply to comply with provincial and board policy, but rather improve instruction, refine professional practice, and ease the implementation of new curricula.

Harold believed professional development for teachers is not an option and as such had this to say when he was asked about the necessity of professional development

for teachers.

> The message needs to be clear. Professional development is not an option. Professional development is valued by the school, by the division, by the district, that everyone in a supervisory role that professional development is *absolutely* fundamental. Fundamental because it has a positive impact upon the students. I think that message needs to go to the community when they wonder why it is that we have these [professional development] days. Everybody needs to understand the absolute importance. I think for too long we minimized that.

In the opinion of the respondents, effective professional development can take many forms but these respondents agreed professional development activities occurring in collaboration with other teachers working toward similar goals and ideas tended to be a very effective use of professional development time and resources. Harold and Karen did point out, not necessarily all professional development activities occurred in small groups in order to be effective but rather depended on the circumstances and the desires of the teacher.

Harold suggested schools and school divisions within the province of Alberta face an ever-growing problem as the teacher force begins to get older and many senior members of the teaching profession begin to retire. Harold believed professional development of teachers is critical to provide a smooth transition between the experienced teachers who are retiring and the less experienced teachers as they are faced with more and more of the responsibilities of leadership within the schools. Harold also believed there will be a critical shortage of qualified individuals willing to take on leadership roles and administrative positions within school systems.

With fewer and fewer individuals who are coming forward and willing to take

on leadership roles, school divisions will face a problem with having appropriate leadership in place to carry schools forward as learning institutions. In order for this transition to take place successfully, he suggested school divisions must be willing to invest time and energy into teachers who are potential educational leaders and provide ample professional development opportunities for those teachers to develop and hone their leadership skills. In short, professional development activities need to be valued by schools and school jurisdictions because professional development activities have positive influences in the classroom.

The respondents from Wild Rose School all believed professional development opportunities must be inextricably grounded in the curriculum for these activities to be effective for teachers. These activities must also be directed by the teacher in so far as the teacher knows what will and will not work for them in the areas of improving instruction or classroom management. It is also important for teachers to decide what types of activities are best suited for them to partake in. Once a decision is made to move forward with particular sorts of professional development, developing teams may provide an excellent starting point for teachers to expand their knowledge base and grow as educators. Harold said "the best professional development I have seen over time is when a bunch of teachers got together and did some things during the course of the day, and the cost, zero, just time."

However, Harold had some cautionary words with respect to the aspect of team orientations in professional development activities. He suggested teams need to be

there for mutual support and understanding but one must be careful as not to create dependency among the members of the team. He also cautioned the use of teams for everything and for everybody. Not all teachers like to work in teams and administrators need to be careful to respect those wishes.

In addition, these professional development activities necessary for continued teacher growth cannot be added beyond the regular teaching duties and become something that is done at the end of the day or necessarily outside of school time. They need to be done during school time and they need to be looked at as shared responsibilities among the school jurisdiction, the local school and the individual. "For too long teachers were expected to carry the load".

The principal needs to support the efforts of teachers wherever possible and for the most part, where they are able, Harold suggests " I provide resources and time" to the teachers. In essence, time is on of the critical components of the professional development activity cycle in that people need time to think and plan, as they plan for and engage in, professional development activities.

Although Harold believed he must support staff members in their professional development efforts, teachers need to take responsibility for their own professional development activities as well and become responsible for their decisions. In reference to teachers taking the responsibility for carrying out their plans, Harold made reference to personal decision making and personal accountability. "Nothing drives me more snakey than a 50 year old teacher coming to me to ask me for permission to buy some

paper or a book or some other supply."

Fern suggested there has been a shift in the focus of professional development directions during the course of her career from group directed activities to those controlled by the individual teacher.

> Twenty years ago everything was group directed. We had institute days, we had conventions, we had district meetings and I think PD 15 to 20 years ago was a very different beast than it is today. I think today is most effective when it is personally driven, and it can be really effective when it is small group directed when like the telus projects that we are doing this year. I think they are very, very effective just because there is a group of people who said yes I will do this and we can see these are very curricular directed in that yes we can look at the tech outcomes

Harold suggested effective professional development "needs to be tied to curriculum". He then gave an example of what he considered effective professional development.

> perhaps one of the best examples of professional development that I can give is what we are doing right now with some of the technology and things and we gathered teacher together who originally identified a curriculum area that they wanted to pursue in terms of technology. Then we pulled them together and said "OK, given that this is the curriculum area, what is the project or what kind of activity would you like to carry out? " They sat down and described the activity and described all of the components to that activity. The next step was to determine what skills and what help do you need in order to facilitate the carrying out of that project. In order for the kids to learn and to work together, collaboratively and this was over a number of schools. In order for the kids to do that, what do you as a teacher need? What kinds of skills do you need? And so now we are going through the process to make sure that teachers have the skills. Small workshops always tied back to the curriculum. Everything is always tied back to the curriculum project or the activity. That which the teachers identified. And at the same time they have provided the opportunity to mentor or support each other and to collaborate. If one has a question, they can come to me or other members of my team or they can go to any of the other members of the project team. So now you have grade 2 teachers for example across the division that are e mailing, phoning, talking to each other about "how did you do this, how did you do that,? Every two or three weeks we gather together for an afternoon and look at the next skill that is needed for the project

to come to completion. By the time the thing is done we will actually measure our success in terms of professional development by looking at what the students have done in terms of the learning and the project that they have created. So that is me as a professional development model that incorporates all of that. Teacher initiated, teacher directed in terms of what, time, in time and over time, teachers collaborate with each other and mentor and help each other.

Regardless of the type of activity teachers participate in or if the activities are primarily group or individually based, support for those activities from administration appears to be paramount in the views of these respondents. Support can be given in a number of ways ranging from ideas shared during growth plan reviews to financial support. Blending the activities into the regular teaching routines and allotting adequate time for those activities was also viewed as important to in the development and implementation of professional growth plans.

Principal Leadership Style: Role of the Principal

Harold suggested that "a school is a collective" and functioned better when the overall operation of the school reflected that of a collective rather than "when it acts like a group of 25 individuals". Harold firmly believed in the necessity for teachers to work together in teams and groups. "I believe that groups of adults learn better than individuals". Further he suggested that he administered schools from this perspective. He said "teams are absolutely vital in the way I administer schools. I am a member of a team, no greater, no lesser than any other member".

Fern and Karen both suggested Harold gave teachers a great deal of support for initiatives related to professional development activities. Both teachers said they felt supported in their respective teaching environments and were also given a great deal of

freedom in order to use their professional judgement with respect to educational matters in the classroom. Fern said, "I have the feeling that on the whole he lets good teachers be good teachers".

Karen suggested that within the current funding framework principals are having a difficult time maintaining the role of educational leader in that their lives are tied to the financial realities of school budgets and funding formulas. She suggested the principal role has become more that of a manager than the role was historically. This has implications for all members of school staff. If the principal is required to spend more time with financial issues, they are less able to devote require time to providing educational leadership within schools and this will force others to take up the role of educational leaders within schools.

Aurora School

Professional Growth Plan Development

James believed principals are faced with the ever-present expectation of providing educational leadership in schools. However, with the advent of site-based decision-making models in the province of Alberta, he believed principals have much less time to dedicate toward educational leadership and must devote more of their time toward financial management and fiscal responsibilities inherent within the currently adopted site-based decision-making model. Within this context he believes teachers must also take more initiative and responsibility in planning for and participating in professional development activities.

For James, the starting point in the development of a professional growth plan for any teacher is in the curriculum areas where the teacher is responsible for providing instruction. "I think every teacher should be absolutely on top of the teaching areas that they instruct". He believed goals contained in professional growth plans needed to be framed in three contexts. First they need to be framed in the context of the curriculum. Secondly the goals need to be framed in the context of school goals. Thirdly the goals need to be framed in the context of school district goals.

Janet identified the curriculum as her primary starting point in the development of her professional growth plan. She cited the fact the educational program delivered in her school was based primarily on prepared, packaged programming and as such did not necessarily meet all of the expected needs for students. Her initial focus in the development of professional growth plans was to look at areas needing improvement and write goals centered on the improvement of that particular curricular material. Janet was asked what steps she might take in the development of her professional growth plan. She said, "the first thing I looked at was weak areas within the courses because we use prepared courses". Thus the curricular materials and in particular weaknesses within the program were seen as a starting point in the process of professional growth plan development.

Violet approached the process of professional growth plan development in a slightly different manner. She tended to look at her areas of strength and areas where she felt she needed to improve her skills. She did say that the administrator had worked

hard at providing information relevant to professional development opportunities and was committed to providing as many opportunities as could be within the constraints of the budget and time of the individual. Violet saw these opportunities to attend conferences as being vital to the growth of teachers in a small staff environment where there may only be one teacher assigned to a particular curriculum specialty such as mathematics. She believed these conferences and sessions provided her with the opportunity to network and share ideas with colleagues from other schools and jurisdictions responsible for delivery of similar curricula.

Curriculum and administrative support were not the only areas Violet considered when developing her professional growth plans. She suggested there is a need to personalize the growth plan with long and short-term goals, internalizing them as much as possible in order to promote and foster life long learning. Further she added

> "...professional growth plans are important in a sense that they make individuals look at where they need to look at themselves and they need to think about that because most of us don't think about where we need to grow. We always assume we are life long learners and we work at different things all of the time but we do not look at what we need to grow. So when we look at professional growth plans we need to look at that."

In her summation of what professional growth plans should are to her, Violet concluded: "Professional growth plans need to reflect the needs of me".

James believed his role in assisting teachers to frame their professional development goals within the context of school and district goals was to articulate the school and district goals to the teachers as well as act as a facilitator for professional development activities. He also saw his role as providing information to teachers in a

timely manner so that staff could benefit as well. His belief in support and communication rather than the presentation of direct ideas stems from the fact he felt principals do not necessarily know what teachers may want or need in terms of professional development goals and activities. He said: "the principal does not necessarily know what their [teachers'] needs are. They [principals] may think they know."

With the advent of information technology related outcomes for students adopted by Alberta Learning, James suggested it was critical for teachers to include information technology goals in their professional growth plans. "A person could have some fabulous growth plans and not have anything in there about technology at all. The principal's role there is then to somehow find ways to bring that teacher up to speed".

If a beginning teacher was having trouble formulating a professional growth plan, James said the first resource he would turn to would be a school board based resource and assist the teacher in setting attainable goals for a given school year. This assistance would also be available to teachers who might have difficulty in formulating professional growth plans and not limited to beginning teachers. James contended that no matter how long a person had taught, there was always room for improvement in teaching practices and approaches. He believed the ability to teach is "inherent in the individual", but there is always room for a person to learn new ideas and strategies as they practice their craft.

With the advent of professional growth plans and site-based decision-making,

James suggested principals would have to be very proactive in their own professional development activities to make certain they are knowledgeable in these areas. Principals and teachers alike are neophytes in the area of professional growth plans with respect to their content, development and implementation and as such need time to adjust their thinking and behavior to meet the needs of the new expectations. James said "principals need to be brought up to speed with their new responsibilities. The same kinds of issues come up around site-based decision making and all the new turf we are walking in".

James also believed the primary responsibility of professional development planning falls within the realm of the individual teacher although he did say there were times when a team planning approach could also provide staff with tremendous growth opportunities as well.

> I expect my staff to be aware of their weaknesses and strengths and the expectations of the curriculum. To be able to do self-evaluations and identify the areas where they need to grow and look for the opportunities that and come to me and say I need this or this and here is a chance for me to, can you help me with this. Is there a way you can help me attain this expertise? Or is there a way you can fund me to go to this workshop or this conference? So I think the teacher, the individual teacher has to take responsibility. I think certainly there is a place for staff as a whole to get together and say these are school needs in regard to PD and again determine what those needs are and come to me in order to facilitate those needs.

James believed a team orientation to professional development activities is critical in Aurora school with the small number of staff and a wide variety of responsibilities held by each staff member. Within the context of Aurora school James believed teachers needed to develop and enhance their approaches in working with

other teachers. This need was based within the context of a non-traditional high school setting where individual teachers are not classroom based but rather share their workspace and resources in close proximity to other teachers and staff members.

Janet suggested her administrator could be very helpful in the creation of the professional development plan in that he could provide a "reality check" during the development of the plan. This reality check would serve to assist her in insuring that she did not create a plan that may be far too ambitious for a given school year. She believed overly ambitious plans could lead to frustration at some point during the school year when she may realize all of the goals she had set out for herself could not be accomplished. She also suggested a consultative meeting about mid way through the school year would be helpful as well in order to discuss progress made with respect to the plan as well as possibly exploring alternatives for revision during the school year.

An issue identified by both Janet and Violet was such that they felt flexibility needed to be built into the professional growth plan. Janet suggested the school "was evolving and as such needs changed from time to time." The option to be able to change the growth plan was seen as a critical component by both teachers. They felt the growth plan needed to be a guide for their growth but also needed to be flexible enough to accommodate the changing needs of students in the school as well as ever changing expectations which may be placed on this staff.

The teacher respondents agreed the principal gives them a tremendous amount of latitude when developing or implementing the professional growth plan. However,

James suggested it is the principal who should have the final say in the activities the teachers will participate in as a way of insuring the professional growth objectives of the teacher are aligned with the goals and objectives of the school, the school division and the province. He further suggested professional growth activities need to be within "acceptable parameters" if the teacher is using school budgeted dollars to support the activities they are participating in and those activities should be aligned with school and district goals. As an example he suggested it might not be appropriate for a mathematics teacher to attend an aroma therapy session as part of the individual's professional development plan whereas the same session might be applicable to the cosmetology teacher.

Professional Growth Plan Implementation

Janet, Violet and James all agreed that a team orientation to professional development activities could be very beneficial to teachers. The proviso was that teachers need to buy into the activity and as such needed to be able to see some benefit to their particular teaching circumstance. Janet and Violet both suggested they enjoyed working cooperatively in order to assist each other with various curricular issues and aid in the professional development of themselves as well as other members of their team.

Violet believed that although the creation of the professional growth plan should be as individual in nature in as much as possible, she also believes professional development can be a combination of both individual and team orientations. She said:

> The [development of] the growth plan itself is an individual thing where individuals are looking at their weaknesses and strengths. Where they want to become stronger and where they need some work. Where their interests are and where they can expand their interests. I think then the implementation of the growth plan is really then a team thing.

Given their teaching contexts, Janet and Violet felt that classroom management sorts of professional development activities provided at district wide professional development days did little in the way of promoting professional growth for them. James agreed and believed teachers derive little, if any, benefit from top-down imposed professional development activities and when activities are imposed on teachers it tends to be a less effective form of professional development. With her background in private industry, Janet added she tended to be dissatisfied with activities as they related to union sorts of activities did little in the way of promoting effective professional development for teachers.

Janet viewed effective professional development activities as those where she was able to incorporate what she had learned and derive immediate benefit from the activity. Great satisfaction is derived "when I am able to put into practice what I have learned and see positive results. So from this I am able to develop confidence to go ahead and try something new, make some changes and yes see positive results for students." For Violet, the greatest professional development satisfaction came from creating course "modules and learning computer skills". Clearly, the incorporation of learned materials as well as the experience in creating and adopting new curricula materials were seen as positive influences in the professional growth of these teachers.

The three respondents from Aurora school agreed professional development opportunities were critical and essential to promote teacher growth and maintain enthusiasm among teachers whether the teachers were experienced or not. The orientation adopted by the respondents was a combination of individual planning coupled with group and individual implementation.

Principal Leadership Style: School Autonomy

James promoted and supported a great deal of latitude for the teachers in their respective schools in the area of decision making. Janet suggested "the administrator has faith in the staff and allows the staff to run the schools independently". Violet also saw the administrator as having a great deal of faith in the staff members of the schools. Further, she suggested the principal was "very encouraging and supportive" toward professional development opportunities. She also said that James worked very hard at providing professional development opportunities for staff members.

Hill View School

Professional Growth Plan Development

The four respondents from Hill View School all echoed the sentiments from previous respondents in so far as they believe professional development is an essential component to teacher growth and development as well as an integral component of school improvement. From the perspective of these respondents, teacher professional growth plans may be seen as a way of affecting change and growth in teachers as well as promoting changes and improvements in the performance of schools. However,

changes cannot be brought about with reckless abandonment because individuals will not transform themselves instantly. Rather, "change is slow, it is purposeful, it takes time and is built on successes."

Kevin believed two guiding principles needed to be considered by every teacher in this school as they plan for their own professional growth. First is the notion that this school really belongs to the community. When he was first appointed principal of this school he did not necessarily hold this particular belief. "When I first got this job and came in mid-summer I was super keen and ready to go. Parents kept dropping in and they would pull me out of what I thought was my office and tell me they would give me a tour of their school. That was the first lesson that I learned." He continued, "remember the school is theirs. We are lucky they let us come here everyday and work. We are the only school I believe in Alberta at the end of each day it turns over to the community and we get it back in the morning".

The second guiding principle Kevin believed teachers must consider is "kids are number one and teachers are number two or three at best." Marge echoed this belief when she spoke of Kevin's beliefs. "Students are first. The students and parents are our clients. We are providing a service for them." Kevin believed this principle led to some staff turn over in previous years with individuals who did not necessarily agree with this belief on a philosophical basis. Subsequent to the major staff turnovers of some years ago, the staff has been relatively stable with few turnovers. Kevin believed staff stability had some benefits as well as some drawbacks. An issue he identified as

potentially problematic is "as we are together longer we have to watch that we continue to push ourselves and our beliefs. There can be a tendency to dig in a little bit on some issues".

In this particular school division, school buses transport students from rural areas to urban centers in order to provide rural students access to urban-based schools if they so choose. However, bussing is not provided for students in urban areas who might wish to attend rural schools. Kevin also believed the notion of one-way bussing competition also helps staff to be creative and pushes staff to think of creative solutions to problems within the school. "So we have learned to live with one way competition. Either do a good job or you don't".

It was evident Kevin had a tremendous amount of faith in staff members to make sound educational decisions even though he might not necessarily agree with the initiative from a philosophical standpoint. He provided an example of an initiative put forth in one junior high school department. The department decided to change the way some students are grouped for a particular subject area. This initiative was designed as a way to perhaps better meet the needs of students and provide a smooth transition to the next grade levels past those taught in this school. Although he did not agree with what had been done, he did not intervene in the decision making process. "I would not have done it this way but it works for them."

Kevin believed strongly in the promotion of team approaches to curriculum planning, teaching, decision making and professional development activities. Various

teams are present in the school ranging from grade specific planning teams to cross grade subject specific planning teams. This guiding philosophy for all of the team initiatives and ideas present in the school stems from the belief that "all staff are equal". This belief held true whether they were teachers, administrators, or support staff.

> Everyone is a teacher and everyone is a learner. And again it is everyone on staff. Not just certified staff. I know the association is only concerned about certified staff but I think it has got to model itself through the whole building.

In order to derive the most benefit from team initiatives in the school, Kevin believes reflective analysis of the process is essential. "We have to make sure that once we believe that [team orientation] we set ourselves up so that when we take a look at what we did this year with the learning we are moving much more strongly to be teams working together".

The teacher respondents from this school shared the strong belief in team-oriented activities as well as the amount of support given to them by the administrator. Donald described Kevin as a very supportive and team oriented administrator who had a very detailed knowledge of the staff members' strengths. He believes Kevin to be a "very strong team player and encourages teamwork". Donald noted Kevin works very hard to find help for teachers if he senses weakness in a teacher and "is dismayed when he sees a staff member isolated". Darwin noted the expectation toward team participation was evident. "We are expected to teach in teams. Now I think he makes that expectation quite clear but I think he also lead us to the place where it started."

Although Kevin promoted and practiced the ideas around shared decision

making and teamwork, he believed that not all decisions and processes could necessarily be approached in a team manner. There are instances where the principal should be allowed to make decisions independently within the school. He also stressed the absolute need for communicating clearly with staff members.

> There are parts [of the budget] that are mine and have to be mine. When it comes to staffing and who works and who works in what grade. I want to meet with everybody. I want to hear all of their opinions but when the decision is there you just have to do it. One of the tricks I have tried to learn is to be clear with people. If it is for decision, then it is for decision. If it is for them to give their input, then I will make the decision, make sure they know that in advance. Otherwise people will get put off if they think they are making the decisions and it turns out they were not.

Donald supported this necessity for clarity with respect to the decision making process. "So at a staff meeting you take a straw vote and then are told how it is going to be, none of us have time for that".

Kevin expressed dissatisfaction with the previous model of teacher evaluation in that he believed the formal evaluation process did little in the way of promoting growth for teachers. "It was my job to catch you [teachers] doing really well or really poorly. I was walking around trying to catch situations." With the advent of professional growth plans, Kevin felt he now had a vehicle by which he could partake in meaningful discussion around professional growth with staff members. Donald mirrored this by saying "what I see has been an invitation to participate that has been exemplary".

Teachers submit their professional growth plan objectives to Kevin in a variety of ways ranging from well-organized formal documents to crumpled pieces of paper to verbal discussions with the principal. Kevin then met with all teachers over a two to

three week period in the fall when he discussed the growth plan objectives with the teachers and tried to initiate the teaming process for individuals with similar goals. Although he generally adopted a supportive role with teachers with respect to the contents of their professional growth plans he did see a role for himself in the development of plans for some teachers. During the discussion with individual teachers "if I feel there is something they need to work on, and they have not put it in [the growth plan], it is my responsibility to tell them at that time". During his discussions with teachers Kevin indicated he would take notes on his interpretations of the contents of the growth plan. He then returned these understandings to the teachers within "a week or two".

The respondents had varying opinions as to the critical components essential in the planning process. Darwin suggested the most critical component for himself in organizing his professional growth plan is his conversations with students in his classroom. He felt the information he could gather from the students was crucial in his ability to plan effectively for his professional development. Donald suggested personal reflection based on past professional growth plans is his starting point with respect to initiating and planning for professional growth.

Professional Growth Plan Implementation

In an effort to promote professional development activities among staff members, the school staff had proposed the possibility of eliminating traditional staff meetings. Kevin believed that staff meetings run in the traditional sense were largely

unproductive uses of teacher and administrator time. He believed 40 or 50 people discussing small, sometimes insignificant issues, was largely unproductive and, as such, new and creative ideas for discussing school-based issues were needed. One such measure was the implementation of regular Tuesday morning representative meetings. Here representatives from the various 'teams' in the school would meet for 45 minutes and try to resolve issues that would normally be dealt with at traditional style staff meetings. The time normally devoted to staff meetings could now be dedicated to the teachers' professional development activities where they were then able to work on their professional growth plan objectives.

Kevin believed in the team approach of conducting business within the school. He believed the school belongs to the community. Teachers and support staff who worked at the school could be considered servants of the community. He believed all staff members were equal and that all members had an equal vote in the decision making process.

He wanted to be sure to communicate with staff effectively on what was happening within the school. If the staff was to have the decision making power around an issue, they must be told in advance. If their input was sought as advice only they need to know that before they go into a situation thinking they may have the final say when in fact the decision has been made by someone else and the staff was merely there for feedback.

Donald believed professional development activities that are continuous are

most beneficial to teachers in terms of professional development. However, he was quick to point out from time to time short, one-time, subject or topic specific sessions could be of great assistance to teachers. He cited an example from his teaching assignment this school year where he attended a session on communicating with autistic children as being extremely beneficial to his practice. He had an autistic child in his classroom and struggled with providing sound educational opportunities for that particular student. The session he attended provided necessary insights he needed to be effectively communicate with the student in a short session. Donald's organizational structure for his professional growth plans assisted him in following a cycle of development, implementation, and reflection. Promising practices were kept and refined upon until they became part of his teaching repertoire.

Principal Leadership Style and Reflective Practice

Kevin suggested "all staff members are equal" and as such all decision making within the school involved all members of staff, not just teachers. He also suggested that "we need to set ourselves up so that when we look at ourselves, we see teams of teachers working effectively together". The three teachers interviewed in this school echoed these sentiments. Marge believed Kevin tried to "empower teachers" and promote leadership with all teachers in various aspects of the school's operation. Darwin expanded on this when he said "the principal gives us a great deal of latitude as to how we construct ourselves as teachers".

Donald echoed the statements of both Darwin and Marge as he spoke of Kevin's

leadership. He did say that Kevin worked very hard to bring about a sense of community within the school. Donald suggested Kevin "was very hands on and makes himself available to those who need his assistance". He also spoke of Kevin's efforts to build community within the school. Kevin "does not like to see staff isolated and tries to build bridges to stem this". Donald also spoke of Kevin's efforts to promote reflective thinking with the staff members.

Donald provided an example of the reflective process as he brought his professional development binder to the interview as well. In this binder he had collected his professional growth plans from the previous school years and through an elaborate coding scheme identified promising practices from the professional development activities he had participated in. He also had numerous examples of reflective writing he had done with respect to professional development activities included in this binder.

Teams and the building of a team environment appear to be the primary focus and direction of this school staff. All respondents commented on this point and although it may seem as though this is the panacea for all.

Summary of the Findings

Planning for, and participation in, effective professional development activities can take many forms as teachers seek new ideas as they strive to grow as professional educators and make the classroom experiences of young people in the Province of Alberta meaningful, productive, and rewarding. Based on the findings in this study,

there is no question professional development activities must be based in the classroom with the curriculum as the focal point for professional development activities. Teachers interviewed during the course of this study varied in their approaches to developing their professional development plans but were consistent in their beliefs about the absolute necessity for meaningful professional development activities to be supported by the school and the school district.

Many participants in this study taught or administered under the previous model of teacher supervision and evaluation expressed some discontent with the perceived shortcomings of the model. They suggested the previous model of supervision and evaluation did not promote teacher professional growth and development, but rather promoted angst and sometimes fear amongst teachers during the times of cyclical evaluations.

Respondents in this study agreed students should be the first consideration when developing teacher professional growth plans or engaging in professional development activities during the course of a school year. Teachers and administrators need to take into consideration the variable needs of students and teachers as well as how classroom practices might evolve during the course of professional development activities. Teacher Professional Growth plans and subsequently professional development activities must be also be based in curriculum and curricular change as teachers strive to promote and provide meaningful learning experiences for students.

Principals in this study expected teachers to reflect upon their professional needs

and subsequently develop meaningful professional growth plans for themselves. Planning and reflection are viewed as critical components in developing a meaningful professional growth plan. Planning and reflection assist teachers in determining their strengths from which they can build as well as potential areas of growth.

Support from the school and the school district level was also viewed as an essential component for teachers engaged in professional development activities. Administrators at all levels can provide support to teachers in many ways including, allocation of money and other resources in school and district budgets geared toward individual and collective professional development activities. Harold suggested in order for professional development activities to be effective for teachers, time must be allocated to teachers to participate in and reflect upon their professional development activities.

Teaching is seen as a natural skill that can be enhanced and refined with effective professional development activities. Teachers interested in growth and development are in the best position to determine and prioritize their own professional development needs. From this belief, professional development activities must be personalized in order to meet the needs of the individual teachers.

Teacher Professional growth plans need to take the form of a living, flexible document in order to be most effective. During the course of a school year, needs of the individual teacher may change from time to time and as such the professional growth plan should reflect the changes in demands on the teacher over time. Students and their

needs need to form the central focus of teachers when developing their professional growth plans as it the student who is most effected by changes in teacher practice.

Continuous, on-going professional development activities were those which were seen to be most effective by teachers because these activities can refocus the teacher to the task at hand. Teachers engaged in continuous professional development activities can then focus on what their needs are on an ongoing basis. In this study respondents agreed about the absolute necessity for continuous professional development to be integrated within the framework of teacher practice and school operation. Ongoing professional development activities were seen as a way to integrate technology, implement curricular changes, and improve classroom instruction. There was disagreement among teachers regarding the necessity of writing and submitting a professional growth plan for review. Professional development activities undertaken as part of team oriented activities were those cited by individuals as being most beneficial to their on-going professional development activities. Harold did suggest some latitude must be given to individuals in order for them to seek meaningful opportunities outside of the team orientations. There are some individuals who may function best as individuals and there are others whose needs and interests may be unique within schools and therefore a team orientation to their professional development activities may not always be in their best interests.

Teachers may want the principal to provide feedback on the progress of their professional growth plans through the course of the year. Principals must be aware of

the needs of individual teachers in this respect. Some teachers may lack the confidence necessary to write and reflect on their learning needs, write a professional growth plan, and implement the professional growth plan without assistance. These teachers may also require some feedback during the course of a school year to help keep them on track or let them know they are doing a good job with respect to their professional growth plans. Other teachers may not want any feedback or assistance from administration during the course of the school year as they may possess the necessary self-confidence and have access to the necessary resources in order to enable themselves the opportunity to complete their professional growth plans. Yet, other teachers may see ongoing administrative feedback as an intrusion on their professional judgements and commitments. Principals need to respect this as well and, to that end, must know their staff well.

Teachers need feedback from administrators or those assigned to review professional growth plans in order to give themselves a "reality check" during the course of a given school year.

The principal impacts the process through support, coaching and possible directions given to teachers as they seek meaningful and relevant professional growth activities for themselves. All teacher respondents agreed their principals were supportive of their initiatives and had not given them any overt directions regarding their chosen objectives but provided suggestions for accessing various activities to meet chosen objectives.

Principals impact professional development by providing support, and in some cases, direction to teachers. The principal may also act as a sounding board for ideas, as well as a resource for suggesting possible professional development activities.

Principals spoke of promoting professional development and working environment through the use of teams and promoting team oriented environments within the schools. They suggested teachers worked more effectively if they were not working on their own, but rather worked in a mutually supportive environment with other teachers for mutual benefit. Teachers expressed satisfaction in being able to work with other teachers in a team-oriented environment. Both principals and teachers agreed that the team orientation to working in schools took a great deal of commitment and work on the part of all teachers involved.

This chapter has provided the findings from the study based on information gathered at each of the respective schools and discussed these findings in the broad categories of professional growth plan development and implementation. The following chapter will discuss the findings in light of the literature presented in chapter 2. The information will be organized in a slightly different manner to reflect the organizational structure of chapter 2 in so far as the thematic outline used in chapter 2 is used to guide the discussion.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Chapter 5 relates the findings presented in Chapter 4 to the literature review presented in Chapter 2. The findings from the previous chapter are divided into the categories of (a) professional development, (b) Teacher Professional Growth Plan development, (c) Teacher Professional Growth Plan implementation, and (d) participant assessment and evaluation of professional development activities. The findings presented in each of these four sections are subsequently related to the relevant literature. The final section addresses the main research question and four sub-questions.

Professional Development

Participants in this study agreed there was a need for administrators and teachers to actively participate in meaningful professional development activities. Participants generally believed the changes in public education, particularly those directed at accountability, were the driving force bringing about the necessity to participate in effective professional development activities to the forefront.

Kevin suggested prior to the adoption of policy related to professional growth plans, the practices of teacher supervision and evaluation used in Alberta did not always focus on the potential for teachers to engage in professional development activities. He suggested the previous model of teacher supervision and evaluation may have promoted angst and sometimes fear among staff members rather than promoting professional development and growth. Wise and Darling-Hammond (1985) suggest that teachers generally do not see the teacher evaluation process as helpful. In order for teachers to

benefit from evaluation, they must see the process as enhancing their professional practices. If teachers do not see the process as being particularly helpful or useful there is little chance teachers will derive any benefit from the process.

DuFour (1991) contends teacher observation and assessment [evaluation] and staff development activities have been viewed as separate processes in most schools (p. 73). He suggests that if principals are able to utilize clinical supervision effectively, they are better able to supplement and complement the existing staff development program in the school. Further, Ramsey (1999) believes that meaningful evaluations can give "candid feedback, pinpoint areas for improvement, reinforce good work and nail down strategies for remedying weaknesses and building strengths" (p. 53). With the adoption of policy 2.1.5, a greater potential to intertwine teacher supervision, evaluation, and staff development activities exists.

Kevin also suggested that before the adoption of professional growth plans, as principal it was his job to "catch teachers doing something really good or really bad" in order to provide feedback and suggestions to regarding their teaching practices. He suggested there was little, if any, opportunity for professional development to happen when he was out "catching" people. In his view the implementation of policy 2.1.5 had the potential to bring about more open dialogue with teachers. In the words of Robbins and Alvy (1995), the dissatisfaction with traditional methods of supervision and evaluation "is a clear indicator that the traditional administrative process has failed" (p 99).

Robbins and Alvy (1995) continue by saying "the old administrative paradigm of intimidation and control lent itself to 'snoopervising' and caused bitterness on the part

of teachers as principals told teachers what they were doing wrong. Further, Robbins and Alvy argue "risk taking cannot take place in an intimidating environment" (p. 100). Without teacher participation and input into their own supervision and evaluation, there is little potential for growth. With teachers living in fear and under duress, there is little chance they will engage in expanding their teaching methodologies but would rather be satisfied with safe and risk free approaches to teaching.

According to Kevin's beliefs, the new supervision and evaluation policy adopted in Alberta seems to allow for an open dialogue between administrator and teacher to take place. He felt as though he now had an avenue to speak frankly regarding educational issues with teachers yet these discussions could take place outside of the realm of formal evaluative processes.

DuFour (1991), Ramsey (1999), Wise and Darling-Hammond (1985), and Robbins and Alvy (1995) support this notion of engaging in dialogue and providing administrative support to teachers in this manner. Harold, James and Kevin agreed the policy still allows the principal some opportunity to give evaluative kinds of feedback to teachers when responding to the contents of professional growth plans or providing teachers with relevant professional development information. The advantage for administrators is such that formative feedback can be given without engaging in the formal evaluative processes of classroom visitations and written reports. Opportunities to give constructive feedback in this way would certainly be more welcomed by teachers and principals alike.

This move toward more open dialogue between teachers and principals can be seen as assisting in building relationships between them. The necessity for developing

and building sound relationships between teachers and principals is supported by Robbins and Alvy (1995) who contend in order to be most effective in the realm of supervision "principals should develop an honest, caring and trustful relationship with teachers" (p. 114). The onus for leading the way in relationship building falls on the shoulders of the principal who must provide the necessary leadership to build relationships with all staff members.

Deep concern regarding staff meetings as an effective use of teacher time and energy was reported by a principal. He suggested staff meetings held in the traditional sense of information dispensing and administrative announcements were a waste of valuable teacher time and resources. He believed a more productive use of teacher time would be to engage teachers in professional development activities rather than teachers engaged in administrivial matters. This belief is echoed by Seyfarth (1999) who suggests the focus of staff meetings needs to move away from the traditional disbursements of information to a more problem solving oriented approach (p. 259).

Developing Teacher Professional Growth Plans

Development of professional growth plans appears to be the critical step for teachers in setting professional development direction and goals in a given school year. For teachers the development of the professional growth plan begins with reflection and consideration of possible professional development routes. Teachers can then consider available professional development opportunities and possible professional development pathways in order to meet their professional development objectives. This also includes considering potential administrative suggestions and modeling. For most teachers the process of professional growth plan development culminates with a written

plan submitted to the principal or designate for review. Upon review and discussion teachers use the plan as a guide through the school year to guide their professional development undertakings.

Participants in this study agreed traditional approaches to professional development did not always meet the needs of teachers. This discontent from teachers and principals was expressed toward traditional models of professional development and growth where, typically, teachers participated in isolated professional development activities often done in isolation and not aligned with personal, professional, or school goals. Seyfarth (2000) contends "conventional staff development receives negative reviews from many educators" (p. 266). Seyfarth suggests traditional models of professional development and growth are "out of date, preoccupied with remediation, irrelevant to the daily practice of teaching and partially responsible for teachers' sense of alienation and powerlessness" (p 266).

Control of the professional development process needs to reside with the teacher. Participants in this study agreed teachers were in the best position to determine their learning needs and must personalize their learning within the context of professional development. As such the ownership of the plan must reside with the individual teacher who has developed the professional growth plan.

Bower (1998) contends "teachers need to feel they are in charge of their professional growth" (p 48). With the new model of supervision and evaluation, teachers now have more direct control over their professional development activities since they are ultimately responsible for initiating and enacting their own professional development plans. Further Bower (1998) contends "teachers will commit more time

and energy if they can apply the [professional development] learning to what is going on in the classroom" (p. 48).

It appears there has been a shift in the control of the professional growth process to the realm of the teacher. This shift in control over the professional development is contradicted somewhat by Wiggins (1994) who argues that even though the ideas of reflective practice and collegial interaction have made their way into mainstream educational thinking and practice, teachers are still not in control of the process. He states "on a large scale, the control of the growth process still rests primarily with the instructional leader" (p. 2).

This argument seems to be counter productive and run counter to what much of the research has been saying about effective professional development activities for teachers. Dufour (1991), Robbins and Alvy (1995), Lovell and Wiles (1983), Renyi (1996), Sullivan (1999), and Fenwick (2000) argue that in order for professional development activities to be most effective for teachers, the teacher must be in control of the professional development activities. The suggestion from the literature is that if the teacher is not in control of the process it is likely that the teacher will put less effort into the process than if they had been in control of the process from the beginning (Bower, 1998).

Seyfarth (2000) believes effective staff development activities in schools require commitment on the part of teachers and administrators working in a collaborative manner in order to work effectively toward total staff improvement. "This involves staff members adopting norms of technical collaboration and professional inquiry" (p. 259). The National Science Foundation writes:

> Fragmented and disjointed professional development pursuits should now be a distant memory as teachers move away from the historic model of fragmented, piecemeal offerings to coherent, well planned and executed professional development plans organized around school and district goals (2000, p. 2)

For the purposes of the following discussion, the process of developing Teacher Professional Growth Plans is divided into several sub-sections. These are: (a) initiating the process, (b) administrative modeling, (c) deciding what to include - administrative influences, (d) deciding what to include - teacher needs and skills (e) writing the plan - choosing ideas and avenues to pursue (f) writing the plan - moving toward implementation and (g) professional growth plan implementation. Finally a brief synopsis of how teachers evaluated the process of professional growth plan development and implementation is presented.

Initiating the process

Teachers and principals in this study agreed reflection was a necessary starting point in the process of developing a professional growth plan. Prior to presenting the discussion regarding initiating the process of professional development a definition of reflection and reflective practice is provided. Seifert (1999) suggests reflection is "the highly individualized act of interpreting experience to draw conclusions or to pose further questions" (p. g-2). I draw upon this definition to frame the discussion revolving around reflection and reflective practice.

Reflective practice was reported as the starting point for the development of professional growth plans by teachers and principals in this study. There was agreemet that personal teacher reflection should be the starting point for teachers who wish to generate an effective professional growth plan for a given school year. When teachers

prepare to write professional growth plans and commit time, energy and resources to their professional development opportunities, they must begin with reflection (Schön, 1987; Wade & Yarbrough, 1996; James 1996; Sergiovanni, 1995).

Teachers in this study suggested they reflect upon several aspects of their teaching in order to develop effective professional growth plans. In doing so they may draw upon one or more of the following parts of their professional practice: (a) teaching experience, (b) teacher observation and dialogue, (c) curricular responsibilities, (d) students in the classroom, (e) extra curricular activities and responsibilities, and (f) school community. It should be noted that teacher reflection is not limited to this list of possibilities and may include various combinations and permutations of the listed items.

All participants in this study agreed with the ideas of reflection and commented on the "absolute necessity to engage in reflective practice." However, few participants in this study engaged in reflection, as defined in this research, for any substantial length of time or any real depth. With many of the teacher participants in this study, reflection consisted of little more than "a bit" of thinking about the previous school year coupled with recording a few ideas on to paper with respect to ideas they wished to pursue over the course of the upcoming school year. Although these participants may have thought from time to time about new ideas and strategies they might like to try in their teaching context, very little concerted and organized effort was reported by teachers as on-going practice and deemed to be an absolute necessity.

However, one participant in this study might be considered a model for teacher reflective practice. Of all the participants, Donald was perhaps the most effectively organized teacher with respect to professional growth plans and his own professional

development. During the interview he displayed a binder containing several sections and included his professional growth plans from this year as well as prior years. This binder was organized and colour coded with the various goals and objectives he had outlined for a given school year. As he participated in professional development activities he recorded notes and ideas in a specific section of the binder. As he reflected on the ideas, some of them moved to a section called "promising practices" while others were discarded or saved for future reference. Overall this collection resembled a portfolio and became his guide for professional development.

Wolf (1991, 1996) contends portfolios, when used appropriately can be effective tools in assisting the professional growth and development of teachers. He said portfolios may be used effectively as tools "to advance professional growth". Andrejko (1998) suggested there are five, not necessarily discrete, components contained within an effective portfolio geared toward support of professional development activities. These areas include: (a) articulation of goals, (b) ways of implementing the goals, (c) log of professional development activities, (d) evidence, and (e) reflection. It appears as though Donald has incorporated many of the ideas put forth.

Although principals agreed there were several areas teachers could consider when looking at possible direction for their professional growth plans, they suggested teachers needed to focus their thoughts more concretely on their teaching responsibilities including the curriculum and the students in the classroom. Seyfarth (2000) contends "in reflective activities, the focus is on stimulating conversations among teachers about classroom experiences" (p. 262). Harold, Kevin and James agreed there was tremendous professional development value in having teachers discuss

and share classroom experiences with others and to engage in discussions which were mutually beneficial.

Administrative Modeling

With the advent of site based decision making in the province of Alberta, the role of school based administrators has changed dramatically. Under this system of school management principals have had to become knowledgeable for a wider variety of responsibilities related to overall school operations. In order to meet the changing roles of administrators, it is imperative principals also engage in professional development activities and practices along with professional staff members. In addition to providing support and feedback to teachers, principals must also be proactive in their professional development activities. They serve as examples to staff members who may be unsure about their own professional development needs and goals. This notion of professional development for principals is supported by Robbins and Alvy (1995) who suggest principals "can model life long learning by participating" (p. 3).

With ever increasing demands being placed on the principal, it would be very easy for principals to forget about their own professional needs and focus rather on the professional needs of staff members. Along with participating in professional development activities to strengthen their administrative skills and practices, administrators who participate in professional development activities are also able to model desirable professional development behaviors and practices among staff members. The modeling of professional development behavior by principals can serve to strengthen the community of teachers as well as strengthen the developing team of educators within the school. This is supported by the suggestions of Robbins and Avly

(1995) and Ramsey (1999) who believe principals are at the forefront of providing models for teachers to follow.

Robbins and Alvy (1995) argue the school administrator must not only be a leader but also a learner. They suggest the best approach administrators can bring to their responsibilities is "leader as learner" (p. 101) where the principal is not only responsible for leadership in the school, but also assumes a learning role focused on improving the professional development climate within the school.

Deciding What to Include: Administrative Influences

If principals are engaged in professional development activities, their participation in these activities will also influence what teachers will and will not include as part of their professional development practices. It can be argued teachers may decide to include ideas and activities based on what the teacher thinks the administrator might want to see included within the contents of a professional growth plan. If this is the case, the teacher is not truly engaging in the process of professional development and focusing on personal growth but merely adopting the influences of the principal.

Principals interviewed in this study expected teachers to be aware of their professional contexts including the curriculum, learning styles and needs of students, and the nuances of the community where the school was located. Principals noted and promoted the use of teams when teachers engaged in professional development activities. Teachers echoed the sentiments of principals and indicated their principals had promoted the use of team approaches for professional development.

Robbins and Alvy (1995) believe school principals impact professional development activities through the provision of resources, engaging in professional dialogue with and among teachers and providing support to teachers. Blase and Kirby (1992) echo and expand on the belief provision of resources as an essential component of professional development. They write "improved performance and professional growth are more likely to occur when basic materials are available" (p. 66). Kevin, Harold, and James all said principals must make provisions within budgets to provide necessary classroom items to teachers. With a large portion of school budgets tied to payment of salaries and benefits, the administrator must find creative ways in which to spend available professional development money and to maximize the benefit to teachers.

Deciding What to Include: Teacher Needs and Skills

Principals and teachers alike agreed the teacher must ultimately be the one to decide what will or will not be included in the contents of a professional growth plan. Harold and Kevin did say they might make suggestions to individual teachers based on their knowledge of the teacher and their abilities as to some of the contents in the professional growth plan. However, they also said ultimately it was the decision of the teacher as to what would or would not be included in the professional growth plan. James went one step further and said he may not provide financial assistance to teachers if he deemed any of the activities teachers participated in as not supporting the goals of the school and the school division as a whole.

James said he believed all teachers bring teaching talents and abilities into the classroom. He suggested it was the responsibility of the teacher to hone their abilities,

skills and talents to meet the needs of students within the classroom. This was done through the participation in professional development activities directed at accomplishing the goals set forth by the teacher in the professional growth plan.

Writing the Plan: Choosing Ideas and Avenues to Pursue

Seyfarth (2000) argues teachers must adopt a more collaborative approach to their professional development activities. He argues

> teachers must agree to forego operating as semi-autonomous individuals who choose a professional development activity from a cafeteria of options without regard to other teachers' choices. They must agree to participate in activities that are relevant for the school as a whole. In short, they must become members of a professional community. (p. 260)

As teachers move toward becoming members of the professional community within the school, they will work toward building a stronger sense of community within the school as well as direct the focus of professional development toward collective well being within the school. According to Seyfarth (2000), "joining a professional community means collaborating and deprivatizing the practice of teaching and teachers' roles, and collectively focusing on student learning" (p. 260).

Valentine (1992) contends joining a professional development community is only a step toward bringing teachers together collectively within a school. He believes in order for teachers to be truly engaged in professional development as a collective staff, "professional development plans [should be] developed collaboratively" (p. 106). The writing of a professional growth plan provides teachers with a unique opportunity to join a professional development community within the school.

When teachers decide to begin formulating the professional growth plan they are able to choose from many activities and ideas available to them. Some of these professional development ideas and activities will be based out of the school while others will be based within the context of the school. It is important for teachers to realize they need to write the professional growth plan from the perspective of using team approaches or individual approaches depending on individual learning styles as well as the specific sorts of topics the teachers wish to pursue. DuFour (1991) and Ramsey (1999) both suggest teachers need to use their own professional judgement with respect to professional development initiatives. Further DuFour (1991) writes that principals must provide excellent programs designed for groups but that they must also "promote professional growth [for] one teacher at a time" (p. 73).

From there teachers must strive to write professional growth plans in a way they are able to convey to the administration what their objectives are as well as writing plans based on attainable goals. Lovell and Wiles (1983) and Ramsey (1999) support the motion of clear planning as an effective way of promoting professional development for teachers. Both Janet and Karen said they needed to be explicitly clear in what they included as part of their professional growth plans. They believed clarity in content of the professional growth plan at the time of submission assisted in the initial review process with the principal. Clarity in the plan also assisted with the planning of personal professional development activities during the course of the school year.

Writing the Plan: Moving Toward Implementation

As teachers finalize their plans and bring them closer to fruition and submission for review by the administrator, they must consider how the plan will be implemented during the course of the school year. Scheduling of sessions and other professional development activities need to be taken into consideration as teachers will necessarily leave the classroom from time to time while they participate in professional development activities outside the classroom either in the school or at other locations. The necessity to engage in careful planning regarding professional development activities is supported by Robbins and Alvy (1995). They contend "we must find imaginative ways of separating adults from children during the school day" (p. 7).

All participants expressed the feeling that professional development activities undertaken as part of teams with other teachers or collaborative projects undertaken with other teachers were more beneficial to the teacher professionally than activities undertaken individually. The team approach coupled with long term professional developmental ideas and strategies seems to be best suited to facilitate lasting growth in teachers and provide a spark toward overall school improvement. Team approaches are supported by Ramsey (1999) , Dufour (1991) and Robbins and Alvy (1995) as being effective than individualized approaches to professional development.

This notion of long term, team orientation approach to effective professional development is tempered with the knowledge teachers may, from time to time, need to participate in a professional development activity similar to one cited by a participant in this study. An autistic student had been placed in this teacher's classroom and the teacher needed an immediate way to learn about communicating with this child. A

short seminar gave the teacher the knowledge he needed and was able to immediately apply this learning to the classroom setting. Although this may not happen to all teachers, they must be willing and able to be flexible in their professional growth plans in order to accommodate ever-changing needs within the classroom.

Ramsey (1999) and DuFour (1991) acknowledge providing support for individualized participation in professional development activities. Ramsey wrote "teams should only be used when it benefits children and not for the convenience of adults" (p. 46). Further Lovell and Wiles (1983) write: "a fundamental part of any staff development program is the effort of staff member to direct, implement, and evaluate his or her own program of self-improvement" (p. 200).

The intention here is not to advocate short term, one shot professional development sessions, but rather point to the idea that some teachers will, from time to time, find it necessary to participate in a professional development activity with a very limited scope. These types of activities may or may not be part of the professional growth plans of teachers but when circumstances dictate, teachers need to be flexible in their approaches to professional development practices.

Once the professional growth plan has been written, it is usually submitted to the principal for review. Principals indicated they received Teacher Professional Growth Plans in a variety of ways ranging from verbal discussions to crumpled pieces of paper to elaborate, portfolio style documents. Typically the principal and teacher will discuss the plan during a meeting where principals indicated they might give individualized feedback to each teacher based on the contents of the professional growth plan and their knowledge of the teacher's abilities and teaching contexts. Support to the idea of giving

candid feedback to teachers comes from Ramsey (1999) who wrote "meaningful evaluations give candid feedback, pinpoint areas or improvement, reinforce good work, and nail down strategies for remedying weaknesses and building strengths" (p. 53).

This notion of providing differentiated feedback to individual teachers is supported by Glatthorn (1984) who suggests principals supervise teachers based on a differentiated approach. The suggestion from Glatthorn is the differentiated approach to supervision assists teachers by promoting growth and development because teachers are supervised in a manner that best suits their personal needs. For example, some teachers may request a more directed approach whereas other, more experienced teachers, "may prefer reflective listening and coaching as opposed to directive support" (Robbins and Alvy, 1995, p. 45). This does not suggest the area of supervision become a wide open, free for all idea. Glatthorn (1984) does provide some words of caution and suggests there is no conclusive evidence that differentiated supervision will improve classroom instruction (p. 6).

Professional Growth Plan Implementation

All teachers who participated in this study suggested administrative support and resources were critical components for implementing professional growth plans; however, Harold had words of caution when he spoke of support administrators should give to teachers. He said administrators and teachers must remember teacher professional development is a shared responsibility. The responsibilities of creating and engaging in effective professional development activities are shared among teachers, the local school including the principal, and the school district. Lovell and Wiles (1983) wrote "the individual must accept responsibility for the outcomes of the

program. The organization must provide the opportunity that includes time, technical support, and psychological encouragement" (p. 189). All stakeholders must commit to viable professional development opportunities for teachers and all must share in the burden of expenses and sacrifice toward professional development.

Sergiovanni (1995), suggests that reflection is an important component of teaching. The implication from Sergiovanni's work is that the reflection teachers undertake is termed "reflection-on-action" by Schön (1987), implying that the teacher reflects before and after the teacher is engaged in teaching. However, Schön (1987) contends that in order to be effective, teachers must also engage "reflection-in-action" (p. 1), referring to teachers and other professionals reflecting on the activities while engaged in the activity itself rather than before or after the activity. All participants in the study agreed reflection was an essential component of the professional growth plan development process but did not primarily engage themselves in reflection-in-action and more importantly engage in reflection-on-action.

Valentine (1992) believes "educators must be committed to continuous professional development" (p. 106). Principals in this study suggested they believed in on-going professional development activities as the most effective way teachers could utilize their professional development resources and time. In particular, Harold suggested that professional development activities need to become second nature to the teacher and should become an integral part of daily routines, much like teaching classes. In Harold's view, professional development needs to be a continuous process where teachers are continually participating in professional development activities whether it

be attending sessions or working collaboratively with other teachers on mutually beneficial projects.

Participant Evaluations of the Professional Development Process

Teachers interviewed were generally supportive of the new direction in professional development practices brought forward by the change in policy as they engaged in the process of writing and implementing professional growth plans. Principals also voiced their support of the professional development process as well, indicating the process of development and implementation provided teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their teaching and also dialogue more openly with principals. Robbins and Alvy (1995) contend "the school is a community of learners and all can learn from one another" (p. 25). As teachers participate in professional development activities, they will likely want to adopt some ideas they have gathered and discard others.

Most teachers indicated when engaged in a variety of professional development activities they tended to choose activities they saw as possibly having some immediate classroom applications. Although this may seem logical in that teachers choose activities to implement based on their professional decision making abilities and their unique classroom setting, in reality they are pre-determining the outcomes of professional development activities before these ideas can be truly tested within the contexts of the classrooms. DuFour (1991) contends "the ultimate goal of training programs is not to create individuals who unthinkingly follow a cook book approach" (p. 57). With teachers pre-determining the outcomes of professional development, this cook book approach can become a very real possibility. Further DuFour (1991)

contends "professional development activities must "develop thoughtful professionals who have the ability to assess and revise their own actions in order to improve the likelihood of success for their studets" (p. 57).

Deciding before hand what to implement within the context of the classroom does not seem to be well suited in bringing about long term changes to teacher's professional practice. Robbins and Alvy (1999) contend "the vision for life-long learning for students can hold greater meaning if teachers and administrators also have an ongoing conversation to improve their talents and skills" (p. 99). With approaches based on determining the outcomes from professional development activities before actually participating in the activity, there is little hope that teachers will engage in the process of life long learning. Further DuFour argues that the ultimate goal for professional development programs should be "to develop thoughtful professionals who have the ability to assess and revise their own actions to improve the likelihood of success for their students" (p. 57).

DuFour further contends that teachers and administrators need to engage in discussion about the whys and hows of what they do. "Challenging teachers to discuss the whys and hows of what they do is the most effective means of developing their ability to think abstractly" (p. 57). Coupled with the previous statements, DuFour contends that professional development "programs should be designed so that this discussion takes place on a daily basis" (p. 57).

Addressing the Research Questions.

The purpose of this research was to determine what influence principals had on the way teachers developed and subsequently implemented Teacher Professional

Growth Plans. The main research question addressed in this study was: How do administrators affect the development and implementation of professional growth plans? Prior to addressing the main research question, the four sub-questions developed as part of the research will be addressed individually below.

1. ***How does the perceived leadership style of principals affect the development and implementation of professional growth plans by staff members?***

For the most part principals in the study were able to identify and communicate what they believed to be their preferred leadership style. Principals in this study believed in a collaborative, team oriented approach to teaching and learning in schools. They supported teachers in efforts to build school teams and environments based on cooperation and mutual trust. There was some evidence that principals felt their time was stretched and they had some difficulty fulfilling the expected role of educational leader in the school as well as providing managerial expertise under the direction of site-based decision making.

Teachers also shared information regarding what they perceived to be their principals' leadership style. Some respondents alluded to managerial and educational leadership types of behavior as outlined in the literature review. They did support the notion that principals worked hard at developing and maintaining team orientations to the school operations. Very little data provided any evidence as to how the leadership style of the principal would, or would not, impact the process of professional growth plan development or its subsequent implementation. Further research focused on the leadership style may provide some insight into the impact leadership style has on the professional development of teachers.

2. *What are the best practices for administrators to use approaching the topic of professional growth plans?*

School based administrators need to be keenly aware of professional development ideas and sessions that may come available during the course of a school year. Principals must strive to develop meaningful and trustful relationships with teachers in order to initiate dialogue with them. This necessity will be most evident when a first year principal is appointed to a school or an administrator is transferred from one school to another. Administrators in these circumstances will need to work particularly hard at developing relationships with the teachers on staff. This does not suggest that principals who have been in schools for an extended period of time can forget about continuing to develop relationships with staff members. All administrators in all circumstances must continually strive to develop relationships with all staff members regardless of the circumstances.

Further, principals need to be aware of their individual staff members' strengths, potential areas for growth and long term career goals. With this knowledge principals will be in a better position to provide ongoing support to teachers. Finally principals need to consciously work toward developing an environment conducive to collaboration. In particular principals should foster environments that stress cooperation, sharing and mutual trust among staff members.

3. *What are the best practices for teachers to use approaching the topic of professional growth plans?*

With the ever changing and increasing demands on teacher time for various educationally related demands the need for effective professional development activities

is more timely than ever. Teachers need to think about working co-operatively with other school-based personnel in their professional development activities. Although some teachers work best on their own in individual efforts and are able to effectively create excellent materials for students, other teachers need the support and collaborative nature of working with other teachers in a group setting to be able to develop effectively.

Harold, Kevin, and James all suggested school based administrators need to work hard at promoting collaborative relationships among teachers within schools. However, Harold also had some words of caution and suggested the decision of some teachers to work alone on projects needs to be respected and these teachers needed to be supported in their professional development endeavors as well.

Kevin appeared to take a very different stance on this issue and assigned all teachers to various groups within the school with or without the teachers' blessings. Darwin stated that group work in this school was not an option but rather an expectation for teachers. He did say most teachers in this school eventually worked and participated in the group activities but the road to this point had not been smooth.

The existing literature seems to suggest that team approaches to professional development are more effective than individualized approaches. This has been reaffirmed in this study as well with some cautionary notes in that not all teachers will like to work in groups in all situations. The best approach for principals to take seems to be to encourage individual teachers to work collaboratively yet not force the issue if teachers choose to work individually as an option.

4. *How do principals provide support to teachers' professional development practices?*

Principals provide support to teachers with respect to professional growth plans in several ways. School budgets are designed to provide teachers with some monetary support toward the fruition of goals contained in professional growth plans. Principals provide feedback to teachers regarding the contents and objective of growth plans. During this feedback the principal has the opportunity to encourage and provide support to teachers embarking on their professional development endeavors. Principals need to allocate resources in the form of release time and classroom coverage in order to support teachers who may wish to pursue relevant professional development activities during school time.

Addressing the main research question

The main research question addressed in this study was: How do administrators impact the development and implementation of professional growth plans?

From this study it appears that support is a critical component of how principals impact teacher professional growth plans. From the analysis of the data gathered and subsequent analysis, it appears as though administrative support is most critical to the professional development process. Administrators provide support to teachers to encourage teachers to stretch and grow as they strive toward professional growth and development. Administrators can also provide support to teachers in terms of financial resources allocated to support professional development initiatives as well as flexible scheduling, time allotments and conversations with teachers about their professional development endeavors.

Figure 1 is a summary of the professional development process as documented within this research. The development and implementation of professional growth plans is central to the discussion of this research.

Administrative influences permeate the professional growth plan as well as have an impact on the professional growth plans generated by teachers. Principals may also assist in the identification of relevant growth activities and opportunities for teachers. Furthermore the principal can provide some direction to the implementation of professional growth plans of teachers. The professional growth plan is shown as having a reciprocal relationship with the process of implementation as the two are inextricably tied together.

Analysis of the professional growth plan as well as professional development activities engaged in will bring promising practices into focus for the teacher. Reflection on the entire process leads teachers back to the starting point of their needs and skills to start the process anew. This chapter has set the findings of the study in the context of the literature. The next chapter will present conclusions and recommendations to the various stakeholder groups involved in professional development activities based on the findings and their relationship to the literature.

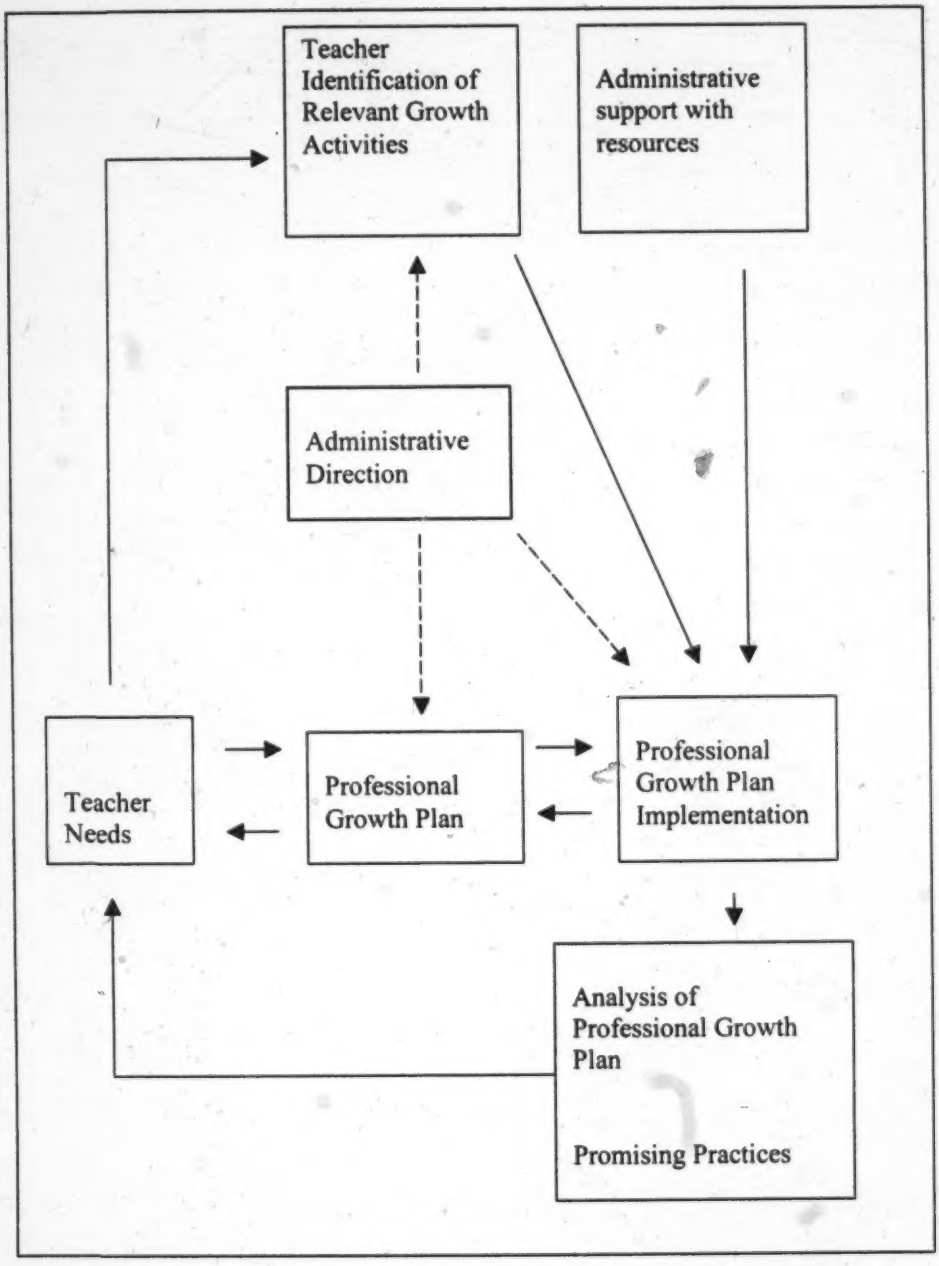

Figure 1: Professional Growth Plan Development and Implementation Processes

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions, Recommendations and Personal Reflections

This concluding chapter consists of three sections. Section one presents conclusions for professional growth plan development and implementation based on the findings of this research. The second section proposes some recommendations to various stakeholder groups. The concluding section in this chapter presents suggestions for further research and personal reflections based on conducting the research, analysis of the data, and the drawing of conclusions.

Conclusions

In this study the three principals and seven teachers welcomed the implementation of policy 2.1.5 and the subsequent requirement for teachers to submit an annual Teacher Professional Growth Plan for review. Principals saw Teacher Professional Growth Plans as a positive change in the realm of teacher supervision and evaluation. Both principals and teachers saw the move toward teacher professional growth plans as a positive change in the realm of professional development and the adoption of professional growth plans as a tool teachers could use to their benefit in pursuit of relevant, as defined by them, professional growth.

Green (1990) and Haughey and Ratsoy (1993) argue that the provincial policy adopted in 1985 providing for written appraisals of teacher performance in the classroom met with dissatisfaction among teachers in Alberta. In contrast, Fenwick (2000) argues policy 2.1.5 has met with more favorable responses from teachers who did not see the previous policy as beneficial or conducive to professional development.

From this research it is evident there is tremendous value for teachers who participate in on-going professional development activities. Teachers can gain numerous insights, both practical and theoretical, by engaging in appropriate professional development activities. Not all participants in this study, however, agreed with the necessity to engage in the formal process of writing a professional growth plan.

I agree and believe there are tremendous potential benefits for teachers who engage in on-going professional development activities rooted in their teaching assignments and undertaken from the perspective that professional growth and development can make great contributions in the classroom. Perhaps this sentiment was stated best by Harold who believed in "the absolute necessity" for teachers to be engaged in continuous professional development.

I disagree that teachers do not need to write a professional growth plan for a given school year because they find the professional growth plan to be "superfluous." Given the complex nature of teaching and the multitudes of available professional development opportunities to teachers, some formalized way for teachers to plan for their professional development and growth seems more desirable than a non-directed, open-ended approach. Further, the professional growth plan provides teachers with the opportunity to engage in reflective practice; something that all teachers need to be engaged in.

If teachers in Alberta are expected to make optimal use of professional development time, energy, and resources in order to improve classroom instruction, they must have some control over the professional development process. Bower (1998)

contends "teachers need to feel they are in charge of their professional growth" (p. 48). The writing and implementation of the professional growth plan provides teachers with this opportunity. As such the ownership of the plan after it is developed must reside with the teacher who has developed it.

All teachers expressed satisfaction with their input and control over the professional development process. Teachers indicated they preferred to be able to determine their learning needs and also to be able to determine what sorts of professional development activities they would participate in rather than have professional development activities dictated upon them. Although teachers indicated they enjoyed the autonomy and control over the plan, they also believed the administrator in a school should be open to providing suggestions to teachers. Teachers looked forward to working collaboratively with other teachers on mutually beneficial projects and undertakings.

Teachers must consider their own learning needs and contexts in order to engage in meaningful professional development activities geared toward improving their professional practice. Teachers also need to engage in professional dialogue with other teachers, administrators and students in order to explore as many avenues as possible with respect to professional development possibilities. Individual teachers must also be supportive of other staff members' professional development efforts and ventures.

Teachers bring with them several innate teaching abilities, skills and individual talents. Through the process of professional development activities teachers can hone these abilities, skills and talents to better meet the needs of students within the

classroom. In order to promote growth and development teachers need to take stock of their skills and talents and build upon them. In terms of professional growth, it will do teachers little good to partake in professional development activities where their abilities are not stretched and teachers merely practice things where they are already proficient. Instead, teachers must engage themselves in activities that will broaden their learning and expand their skill sets.

When individual teachers reflect on their circumstances they are in the best position to determine their learning needs. Based on their abilities, skills, intimate knowledge of their teaching responsibilities, and reflective practice, teachers have the best insights as what activities and directions should or should not be included within the professional growth plan. The notion of teachers reflecting on their practice seems to be an appropriate way for teachers to begin developing professional growth plans.

Most participants in this study, however, did not engage in reflection to any great extent. The challenge for administrators is then to encourage teachers to become more self-reflective in their practice. Administrators must realize that if they do not require teachers to be reflective in any manner there is little chance teachers will actually do so. Administrators must find ways to encourage teachers to become actively involved in reflection and the professional development culture within the school.

Principals must understand they will need to play a role in the reflective practice of teachers. If principals want teachers to be engaged in reflective practice, then principals need to become models for reflective practice within the schools. Through modeling of professional development activities and reflective practice, principals can

help teachers develop innate professional development and reflective practices within themselves. Beyond the modeling of reflective practice, principals must encourage teachers to participate in reflective practice, perhaps even to the point of requiring teachers to participate in reflective practice.

Within the guidelines set forth by policy 2.1.5., school principals may choose to read and give feedback to staff members regarding the submitted professional growth plan. Alternatively the principal may choose not to read the professional growth plan and instead may choose to have a small number of teachers read and give feedback to the professional growth plans. Regardless of the choice as to who reads and give feedback to the professional growth plans, the decision must be one made by the staff as a whole rather than the choice being arbitrarily made by the school principal.

As teachers develop their plans they must consider the shortfalls of traditional approaches to professional development activities. Further teachers engaged in professional development must carefully consider "the lack of learning during traditional professional development practices" (Burek, 1998, p. 39). As such, teachers need to focus on their skills and talents brought to the classroom. Teachers must remember the professional growth plan into and of itself will not promote reflection, nor will the plan promote professional development.

Teachers will continue to need support from administrators as they plan their professional development activities and move toward availing themselves of the most meaningful professional development opportunities possible. Principals need to be supportive of teachers and their individual and collective professional development

practices. Supportive in the sense that principals need to engage in meaningful discussions with teachers as well as provide whatever kinds of financial and resource support school based budgets will allow. Principals also need to become models for professional development activities in that they need to participate with staff members in as many activities as their time will afford.

If principals decide to read all of their staff's Teacher Professional Growth Plans, they will have an insight into the professional development goals of all staff members and perhaps be able to make available more meaningful professional development opportunities. In this circumstance the principal must take the onus upon himself or herself to provide relevant information to teachers regarding professional development activities and events. Reading of all the professional growth plans has the potential to provide the principal with insights previously not available to the administration with respect to teacher professional development and desires. There is a potential for principals to bring together teachers with common professional development goals and encourage collaboration among these staff members.

The key in either instance is to develop a culture of trust and support within the school so teachers feel comfortable with the reader of the professional growth plan, be it the principal or groups of teachers.

If groups of teachers are chosen by the collective staff to read and provide feedback for professional growth plans, the potential for open dialogue among teachers who may have similar goals may be greater. Choosing to have teachers as readers for professional growth plans has the potential to promote teacher-initiated collaboration

among staff members who may not have had the opportunity to work together under other circumstances. This potential for collaboration can serve to bring staff members closer to common goals and directions within the school. In this case the principal does not have direct knowledge of Teacher Professional Growth Plans but still must shoulder the responsibility of providing relevant professional development information to staff members.

Administrators and teachers must choose carefully as the option chosen must have the support of all staff members. Each option with respect to the reading of the plans carries with it several benefits for both administrators and staff members. It is up to the staff members to decide which option suits their needs and circumstances best.

However, choosing one or the other alternative may not necessarily be the best solution for this dilemma. Perhaps the best solution is to have the principal and all teachers in a school read the professional growth plans collectively. Professional development is certainly about people working with others and learning from each other. If the schools move to establish a culture of open doors, all personnel in the school may learn from each other. All staff in a school are not only responsible for reflecting on their own professional development activities but they are also responsible for their colleagues and providing assistance to each other.

Professional development plans are but one way to promote interdependence among staff members. The proviso here is all staff must be committed to mutual support and commitment to on-going professional development activities. If all staff in

a school are not committed to professional development, the task is more difficult for those staff members who are committed to the task of professional development.

With ever increasing demands being placed on the principal, it would be very easy for a principal to forget about his or her own professional needs and focus rather on the professional needs of staff members. As such it is critical for administrators to be proactive about their professional development needs as they assist teachers engaged in professional development activities.

As teachers move toward bringing the contents of the professional growth plan from a list of objectives to participation in various professional development activities, teachers and administrators need to work together so that teachers can benefit from professional development. Developing close knit school communities is a key priority for school based administrators. As teachers and administrators work together to bring the school community together, professional development activities undertaken by teachers will have an impact on the entire school staff whereby staff members are willing to share materials and work cooperatively with other teachers both within and outside of the school.

Developing a trusting and open community seems to be the crux of effective professional development for teachers within schools. The principal and teachers must be willing to support each other in a mutually beneficial way so that all members of the school community are able to derive benefits from professional development activities.

Recommendations

All stakeholders within the realm of public education must commit to viable professional development opportunities for teachers. Without a commitment to providing professional development opportunities for teachers, there is little hope teachers will carry the burden of professional development on their own. Given the conclusions reached in the section above there are several emergent recommendations, addressing the conclusions, for the various stakeholders with respect to professional development activities presented in the next section.

For All Stakeholders.

Professional development is a costly undertaking both in terms of time and monetary resources. All stakeholders must be willing to commit financial resources toward providing teachers with viable professional development opportunities. The burden of professional development needs to be shared among all stakeholders and teachers should not be expected to cover the costs of all their professional development activities but can be expected to dedicate time and cover some of the financial costs incurred in these endeavors.

For Teachers

Teachers need to continually engage in reflective practice as a way of improving their teaching. Reflective practice on the part of teachers can become one of the key ingredients in school wide and district wide improvement initiatives. As teachers engage in reflective practice, ultimately students in the classroom will benefit from improved teaching strategies. However it is critical teachers move beyond the notion of

simply thinking about what is happening and move toward formulating long term action plans based on their thoughts. There must be an action plan in place for teachers so that they know what they are going to do about their thoughts and how their plans may come to fruition.

In order for teachers to benefit from reflection, they should engage in a systematic process geared toward continual analysis of their teaching. First, teachers need to look at a difficulty they may have or define an area they feel may need improvement. This may be done individually or in collaboration with other teachers or administrators. Mutual trust is essential to defining a potential area for improvement. Teachers then need to collect information from various sources about their teaching practices. These sources can include other teachers, students, parents, and administrators.

After the information is collected, teachers need to critically and openly analyze the information and formulate an action plan for themselves. It is here where the professional growth plan can be a useful tool, where, it can become a vehicle to bring forth a teacher's action plan. With the plan in place, it is the teacher's responsibility to follow through with the plan and engage in necessary professional development activities with the support of the administration, school staff, and the school division. From here the process begins anew and the teacher again should be collecting data regarding their teaching strategies as well as any new innovations that have come froward from their previous action plans.

Teacher Professional Growth Plans need to be used in such a way as to promote collaboration and teamwork among and between school staff. Growth plans can also be used to foster the seeds of life long learning for teachers as well as providing models for students to engage in this process as well. Professional development activities are critical for teachers who will be faced with ever-changing expectations placed on them. As needs and directions change within public education, teachers can rely on their skills and abilities developed in order to afford themselves the necessary flexibility to change as needs change.

Teachers are in the best position to determine their learning needs. From time to time they may seek advice from other teachers and administrators but ultimately must be in control of their own learning goals and objectives. Teachers, therefore, must have final say as to the contents of the professional growth plan. As such, teachers need to focus on their skills and talents brought to the classroom and attempt to broaden their teaching strategies as well as continually hone their current teaching skills.

With the teacher having final say over the contents of the professional growth plan, teachers will have more control and say over their professional development directions. This "reflects a recognition of the need to plan professional development close to the scene where students and teachers interact" (Seyfarth 2000, p. 259). If principals are able to begin and maintain the relationship building process, teachers and other school staff are likely to participate in this process as well, thus creating a school climate conducive to meaningful and productive professional development activities.

It will do teachers little good to partake in professional development activities where their abilities are not stretched but the teacher merely practices what they already know and do well. Teachers must, instead, engage themselves in activities that will broaden their learning and expand their skill sets.

For School Based Administration

School based administrators need to support teacher professional growth through the allocation of available budgetary resources and support. Principals and other school based administration need to provide overall directions to schools and school staff. The administration must be able to provide timely feedback to staff regarding professional development ideas and opportunities. They must also be willing to let teachers take control over their own professional development needs and activities while providing as much or as little input into the process as teachers desire.

This responsibility, however, may be a source of conflict between teachers and administrators. If teachers firmly believe they are doing a good job in the classroom, yet the principal believes there are one or more areas where teachers may improve their skills, conflict will probably occur between an individual and the principal. In cases like these, principals and teachers must continue to work together and strive for the professional growth of the teacher even though the relationship between them may be strained or become strained.

In this study all principals agreed that teachers should be in control of their professional growth plans. Teachers needed to makes decisions based on what they felt is or is not necessary with respect to their professional development needs and desires.

Principals also reserved the right to have input into the professional growth plans of teachers when principals believed teachers were experiencing difficulty and in need of assistance in direction. The stress in these cases was that all of these issues are really on a continuum from leaving teachers completely on their own to decide the contents of the professional growth plan to other circumstances where the principal could be more directive with the teachers. Harold, in particular, stressed that the principal must be absolutely clear with teachers who may be in some difficulty. He suggested that although teachers were indeed free to choose their professional development alternatives, they must also be cognizant of the consequences of poor classroom teaching.

Clearly the principal must make provisions within budgets to provide necessary classroom items to teachers. With a large portion of school budgets tied to payment of salaries and benefits, the administrator must find creative ways in which to spend available professional development money and to maximize the benefit from the money utilized by teachers.

For Central Office Personnel

Central office personnel are faced with a daunting task related to teacher professional development. Central office administration must provide division wide perspectives on professional development issues as well as provide overall direction to the entire school division. Simultaneously, central office personnel, in school jurisdictions operating under the model of site-based decision making, must be careful to allow schools and teachers to make decisions based on the local needs at the school

level. If teachers are not given the choice, there is little chance they will benefit from an activity they perceive as being directed by central office.

In order for this to happen, central office personnel must solicit input from teachers and compile a list of needs and goals related to professional development of teachers within the school district. Central office personnel can then compile a list of areas where there is greatest need in a school division and possibly promote some or several of these potential growth areas. Schools should then be allowed to pick the various activities that best suit their local needs.

If central office personnel decide to promote and provide financial assistance to district wide professional development opportunities, they must do it in such a way as not to have the professional development opportunities appear to be dictated. Central office can provide the support as well as organize opportunities for teachers but still must let teachers choose for themselves.

Central office personnel can provide leadership in the coordination of human resources to provide professional development activities, providing relevant professional development information to schools, and financial support through the allocation of resources seems to be the best ways school district offices can assist with teacher professional development programs.

For Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education programs need to continually reinforce the necessity for beginning teachers to engage in reflective practice. Through relevant coursework and assignments, beginning teachers can be encouraged to develop reflective and

collaborative skills that will also serve them well when they enter the world of teaching. This task may prove somewhat difficult as typically teacher education programs are based within universities where competition among students for grades and ranking is the norm. Further student-teachers may feel they have very little to draw upon in the way of actual teaching experience and as such promoting reflective practice based on very little teaching experience may prove very unappetizing to students in general.

Although the students in teacher education programs do indeed have limited direct classroom teaching experience, they have a tremendous amount of experience within the classroom as a student. Coupled with the experience in various classrooms, there is a myriad of potential other experiences available for students to draw upon in that any relevant experience where potential teachers have worked with others is a possibility and can be utilized to reflect upon. The key for student teachers is to look at a situation, attempt to understand the areas of strengths and weaknesses they brought to the event and build a plan for action from that learning.

The potential for students to draw upon outside experiences is virtually limitless. Students must stretch their imaginations and thoughts in order to analyze potential learning situations. It is critical that teacher training programs adopt practices which will assist students in becoming reflective teachers in the truest sense of the words. Teacher education programs must recognize students have a tremendous amount of experience in the educational realm and draw upon those experiences so that when these new teachers begin to reflect, they can begin to draw upon all facets of their experiences within the educational system.

In order to promote reflective practice, teacher education programs may consider adopting portfolios as standard practice for student teachers. The portfolio may be used as a way for student teachers to collect ideas and events from their past as well as samples of reflective writing where the student teacher analyses the event and plans for future action. The focus of this practice needs to be the process of reflection and planning for action rather than the finished product of a portfolio.

Teacher education programs must also find ways in which beginning teachers can begin to share ideas including lesson plans, classroom management strategies, and teaching strategies with each other. The promotion of sharing among classmates and colleagues can only serve to benefit the new teacher who can then draw upon, not only their own wealth of resources, but also utilize ideas from other sources as appropriate in order to grow as a teacher. As new teachers leave teacher education programs and enter the world of teaching, their ideas of collaboration and sharing can only be filtered into the school system with them and assist in the promotion of the same ideas within the school system.

For Alberta Learning

Policy 2.1.5 emerged as a result of several factors and seems to address the needs for teachers to be a more direct participant in their professional development activities as well as exert more control over their professional lives. As such the policy has taken great strides towards encouraging all teachers to become reflective practitioners. The policy deals specifically with teachers and their individual plans for a given school year. Alberta Learning should consider having more options for teachers

with respect to their professional growth plans. Provisions should be in place for groups of teachers to develop and implement professional growth plans collectively. The possibility of developing a growth plan in cooperation with another teacher may encourage teachers to undertake collaborative projects with others. Provisions need to be written into policy allowing greater sharing of professional growth plans among teachers.

Alberta Learning also needs to consider allocating more money to be specifically dedicated toward professional development of teachers. If the monies are allocated toward professional development, this money needs to and should be "enveloped" money so that it does not fall into the category of general revenues for schools and school divisions and thus get absorbed into teacher salaries or operational expenditures for schools. This money absolutely needs to be dedicated to the professional development of teachers and cannot be funneled into other need areas of a school.

For The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association needs to continue to promote the professionalism of teachers and principals. The Association needs to continue to lobby government in order to insure the professional growth plans for teachers will not simply become a passing fad but be entrenched as part of teaching responsibilities and routines in Alberta. The Association needs to also promote professional development activities among its' members as part of effective teaching strategies, this includes providing support to schools by way of professional development consultants who are able to

come to schools and provide support to school based initiatives. This also includes continuing to support the work of the association instructors who travel to various schools delivering professional development sessions.

Many participants expressed some concern over the professional development they were able to obtain during the annual Alberta Teachers' Association sponsored conventions. Many expressed discontent with conventions and suggested the money spent during convention time may be better used to support professional development activities in other ways. However, teachers also expressed a need to continue with conventions because these times gave them a chance to visit with former colleagues as well as network with other teachers who may be teaching similar courses yet in different circumstances. If conventions are to be kept, all stakeholders must find a way in which they can incorporate the short sessions typically offered at conventions into the long term and long range professional development programs teachers will have established for themselves.

If conventions are to continue as they are, teachers need to critically analyze what they hope to accomplish during convention. Teachers need to step back and reflect upon their professional development goals and attend sessions that may perhaps seem of no interest to them, yet may offer something in the way of a new idea of format for themselves. Teachers need to stop looking at conventions as a way in which they hope to attain the magic solution to be able to bring back to their class for the next Monday morning lesson.

Convention boards need also to look critically at the available programming and decide where they may strengthen the programming. As such they may consider contacting speakers and presenters from specialist councils who often deal with very subject specific topics in order to allow teachers interested in subject specific access these to ideas during convention.

Summary

With the adoption of policy 2.1.5, a greater potential to intertwine teacher supervision / evaluation and staff development activities exists. Through the process of professional development activities, teachers can improve and refine their skills as well as expand their teaching repertoire to include teaching strategies and activities not currently in their teaching practices.

The responsibilities of creating and engaging in effective professional development activities are shared among teachers, the local school including the principal, and the school district.

Implementation of policy 2.1.5 and subsequent adoption of locally developed policy by school boards in Alberta can then be seen as a move toward a greater inclusion of teachers in the processes of supervision and evaluation. In addition the rationale in adopting the policy was to provide a more open and accountable educational system within the province. With the adoption of this policy there is a greater potential for meaningful dialogue to take place between principals and teachers or among teachers regarding professional growth and development.

As teachers plan activities and move toward availing themselves with the best professional development possible, they will continue to need support from school based administration. Administrative support and resources are critical components for implementing professional growth plans. Administrators and teachers must remember professional development is a shared responsibility. These responsibilities are shared among teachers, the local school and the school district. All stakeholders must commit to viable professional development opportunities for teachers and must share in the burden of expenses and sacrifice as well as the joys and benefits toward effective professional development activities.

Suggestions for Further Research

The sub-question related to the leadership style of principals has remained largely unanswered. A new set of data collection instruments may need to be developed in order to collect this information. Perhaps a questionnaire based on the work of Glickman, Goordon and Ross-Gordon (1998, pp. 104, 105) may assist in obtaining the data necessary to draw conclusions regarding how the leadership style of an administrator impacts the process of professional growth plan development and implementation

The issue of developing trust between teachers and administrators arose in this study. Within this realm, longitudinal research is needed in order to investigate if the implementation of professional growth plans has assisted in developing trusting relationships between teachers and administrators.

There are several other topics and ideas brought forward by this research that warrant further investigation. Only two of the respondents had not worked in public education prior to the adoption of policy 2.1.5. Consequently, most participants in this study will have had experience under the previous policies governing supervision and evaluation. In three or four years, a comparative study could be undertaken. This study would compare teachers who have only worked under the policy where professional growth plans are their only experience and compare their beliefs, experience, and ideas to those who have worked in public education when supervision and evaluation was governed by the policy adopted in 1985.

Concluding Remarks

This study explored how principals impacted the process of professional growth plan development and implementation. Principals can impact the process of professional growth plan development in so far as they can provide feedback and suggestions to teachers regarding the goals and objectives written into the plans. Principals can also impact the professional growth plan in cases where the principal may believe the teacher in question may need some directed assistance toward professional improvement. In these cases where a teacher may be marginal or having some difficulty with respect to their teaching, principals may wish to have a more direct impact on what the teacher does or does not include in the professional growth plan. Principals will also impact professional development activities of teachers through the support or absence of support toward the many activities teachers will participate in through the course of a given year.

Through the collection and analysis of data it became very clear for the absolute necessity of teachers being engaged in long-term, on-going professional development practices with professional growth plans serving as guides for teachers engaged in professional development activities. Also the need for teachers to engage in reflective practice has become evident as well.

Participating in on-going professional development activities is essential for teachers who wish to remain abreast of developments and changes within education. Participation in professional development should no longer be considered an option for teachers as they seek meaningful and relevant ways to expand upon their teaching skills. Participation in professional development is also a way for teachers to build networks, collaborate with colleagues and enhance their delivery of instructional materials to students. Through participation in professional development activities, teachers can truly engage in and model the process of life long learning.

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Appendix A

Letter Seeking Permission From School Jurisdictions

Leonard R. Arden
17119 - 83 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5Z 3E3
476 0398 (home)
923 2443 (work)
arden@sturgeon.ab.ca

[Date]

Dear Sir

Further to our recent telephone conversation I am submitting this letter of request to conduct educational research within your school division. The research will be the culmination of my master's degree work at the University of Alberta. I am currently a part time student in faculty graduate studies and research at the University of Alberta.

The research I am undertaking is attempting to determine if principals' leadership style affects the development and implementation of professional growth plans by teachers. I would like to conduct this research at [name] school utilizing the principal and two volunteer teachers from the school. The proposed survey to be completed by the principals is included with this letter for your information. The principal and volunteer teachers will be interviewed with interview questions currently under development. These questions will be forwarded to your office at your request. I am requesting your approval to contact the principal of the school to set the research process in motion.

Great care will be taken to assure the confidentiality of the data collected and all data sources will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. I will provide an executive summary of my findings once the research is completed to the attention of the school board. Once my thesis is complete and bound I will forward a copy of the thesis for the school division library.

I would like to thank you in advance for your support in conducting this research and look forward to your letter of approval in this regard.

Sincerely;

Leonard R. Arden

Appendix B

Sample Letter Seeking Permission From School Principals

Leonard R. Arden
17119 - 83 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5Z 3E3
476 0398 (home)
923 2443 (work)
arden@sturgeon.ab.ca

Feb 22, 2000

Harold
Principal, Wild Rose School
Box 501, Wild Rose, Alberta
HOH OHO

Dear Harold

Further to our recent telephone conversation I am submitting this letter of request to conduct research within your school. The research is the culmination of my master's degree work at the University of Alberta. The research I am undertaking is attempting to determine how a principal's leadership style affects the development and implementation of professional growth plans by teachers.

I would like to conduct this research at your school utilizing yourself and two volunteer teachers from the school. The proposed survey to be completed by you is included with this letter for your information. Interview questions are currently under development and will be forwarded to you office at your request. I am requesting your approval to contact your staff and set the research process in motion.

Great care will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data collected and all data collected will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. I will provide an executive summary of my findings once the research is completed to your attention and the teacher respondents.

I would like to thank you in advance for your support in conducting this research and look forward to your letter of approval in this regard.

Sincerely;

Leonard R. Arden

Appendix C

Sample Letter To Teachers Seeking Their Participation

Leonard R. Arden
17119 - 83 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5Z 3E3
476 0398 (home)
923 2443 (work)
arden@sturgeon.ab.ca

March 6, 2000

Dear Colleague

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study. The research is the culmination of my master's degree work at the University of Alberta. The study I am undertaking explores the relationship between principal leadership style and the development and implementation of professional growth plans by teachers.

Interviews will take no more than ninety minutes of your time. A substitute teacher will be provided to allow you release time in order to participate in this study.

Great care will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data collected. All data collected will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. I will provide you with an executive summary of my findings once the research is completed. You may choose to opt out of the study can do so at any time without any recourse. Participants can opt out by either informing me at one of the numbers listed above or my research advisor at one of the numbers listed below.

The intent of the research is to gather data solely for the purposes of addressing the research question. No other purposes are intended by the data collection processes. Deception will not be used during the interview process to gather data outside of the research question.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact me at any of the above listed numbers. If you have any questions regarding this study for my research advisor, you many contact Dr. Jose da Costa at The University of Alberta, Department of Educational Policy Studies. His department telephone number is (780) 492 7625 and his e mail address is: Jose.da.Costa@Ualberta.ca.

I would like to thank you for your support in conducting this research.

Sincerely;
Leonard R. Arden

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form

Consent From

I _____ am willing to participate in the study examining the effects of a principal's leadership style on the development of teacher professional growth plans as described in the letter.

I understand this study is conducted for the purposes of graduate studies at the University of Alberta and the findings will contribute to a thesis on the effect of principals' leadership style on the development and implementation of professional growth plans.

I give my consent to audio taping the interviews with the researcher. I am aware the anonymity of participants will be respected during the course of this study and its publication. I understand I may opt out of this study at any time for any reason.

Signed: _____

School: _____

Dated: _____

Appendix E

Administrator Interview Schedule

1. Please describe your formal education and training
2. Please describe your teaching background
3. Please describe your administrative background
4. Future Desires
5. Describe this school
6. What kinds of PD activities do you try to encourage staff to participate in?
7. Who determines staff development activities?
8. Describe the PD committee in this school
9. What kinds of activities do staff typically benefit from most / least?
    - Elaborate (classroom or otherwise)
10. For teachers who have questions about the development of their professional growth plans and how to develop and implement them, what sorts of steps do you follow?
11. Describe your role in professional development of yourself, your colleagues, your teachers.
12. What areas have you identified as critical in so far as teachers should be engaged in professional development activities to improve their skills
13. What is your role in the development of professional growth plans? / Implementation of growth plans?
14. What do you expect from staff in terms of PD?

Appendix F

Teacher Interview Schedule

1. Could you please describe your formal education and training
2. Could you please describe your teaching background
3. Describe this school and your teaching assignment within the school
4. How did you develop your professional growth plan?
5. What have you undertaken in the way of professional development activities this year?
6. What have you undertaken for professional development activities in previous years? (list all that you can think of)
7. Has your professional development been self directed, group directed, administrative directed or some combination thereof?
8. What types of Professional Development activities have contributed to the greatest amount of satisfaction in your career
9. What types of PD activities have contributed to the least satisfaction in your teaching career
10. Describe the PD committee in this school
11. Describe your role in professional development of yourself, your colleagues, your administrator.
12. Describe how you would go about developing your professional growth plan for a school year
13. Are you engaged in the process of developing or have you developed a teacher portfolio?

14. What areas of PD are you engaged in as a matter of skill development toward your particular teaching assignment?

15. What would you like to see from your administrator in terms of PD?

Appendix G

Sample Interview Transcript

Transcript of Interview 1

I: The first thing I would like you to do in terms of this interview is describe your administrative background in terms of where you have been, where you are and perhaps where you are going.

R: In terms of administration, all of my administrative career has been with one school division. That has some benefits and some detractors at the same time. In that I spent 6 years as assistant principal one a k - 9 school and the other a high school. A High school of about 1000, the k - 9 of about 450 students. Three years at each of those schools. I then moved to a k - 9 school and was principal there for a period of 7 years. At the same time, the last two years of that, administrator of an outreach school, including the development of the school. And those were concurrent. From there, I moved to a central office position as district principal responsible for areas such as professional development and technology. For a while, staffing and whatever variety of projects the principals or superintendent deemed important. That was two years, at the same time concurrent I was also principal of the two Learning Centres or outreach schools in the jurisdiction. Currently, it is my first year at a k - 9 school of about 500 students. So I guess if I look back in total that should add up to about 16 years of administrative experience in one school division in 6 schools and central office.

I: And Future Plans?

R: I expect to be at this school for a couple of years. We have begun to work on a direction for the school and would certainly like to see us be well on our way in terms of where we are going and have that down pretty solid. Then we will see what opens up. Certainly I would be more than open to a central office type of position.

I: What kinds of direction were you speaking of?

R: I think subtle changes in terms of professional development, changes in terms of delivery in terms of special education. I think as well just a look at the school in general. Its a very traditional stable community. Both in terms of the community and in terms of the teaching staff. We need to (I guess) do some work even there as we look at the next ten years, the next five years as some of the teachers get a little bit older on and begin to retire and leave. Do we have a good solid foundation there and that will continue to remain outside of the minds of the teachers. Is it actually there as kind of an umbrella for the whole school. Does everybody really know what is going on and does everybody really know the direction or is it just in the heads of the older teachers. Of which there are a significant number.

I: So you are looking at things like school culture then?

R: School Culture.. Yes

I: Could you describe... you alluded to professional development a little bit. What kinds of subtle changes?

R: Again looking at who is responsible for determining the professional development needs. The process that teachers would undertake to decide upon their professional development path and activities that they would like to take part in. A subtle change from what I perceived to be more of a administrative: This is where we shall go and come to me for permission view to professional development to one which is clearly: these are the resources we have available at the school and you as an individual and as a collective need to decide how you are going to best use those to enhance the learning of our children.

I: So to make certain I have the information then: Typically the administrative team and if it were comprised of teachers would be the people defining professional development activities and now you want to switch that to a community orientation.

R: Yes

I: OK

I: What kinds of activities in terms of professional development do staff benefit from the most and the least. Now that is a two - pronged question.

R: That really, really depends on the individual. There are some that benefit from the kind of conferences, workshops, that I abhor. One day, one time you go and there are some of my staff that enjoy those and learn from then and bring back some useful materials and things and make changes accordingly. There are some of my staff, and I am one of those that is included, that does nothing for me and for me it has to be long term. I think if I describe professional development when it is most effective form. For most people (a) it has perhaps the following qualities: it is something that they have decided, agreed upon, that it is important to them.

I: So they buy into it?

R: So...(nod yes) and they have identified it. It's not even that I have identified it and then convinced them, to buy into it, it's almost that through a process. And it may have been my kind of idea that kind of shot out but they have clearly identified it as an issue or something that they want to pursue. Secondly then that there is time. And that it happens in time and over time. That there is time to do it when it needs to be done. But it doesn't happen just today, it happens over a period of time and with that of course is follow up. Time to practice and time to reflect and time to implement and time to review and more time to reflect, but it doesn't today, it takes place over an extensive period of time

I: Would you look at that as a model. You would be a model for life long learning you are trying to instill in the students?

R: Yes

I: You then want staff to practice the model?

R: Yes

R: I think as well.... It needs to be tied to curriculum.... Or what I do on a day to day basis and works best that way. And perhaps one of the best examples of professional development that I can give is what we are doing right now with some of the technology and things and we gathered teacher together who originally identified a curriculum area that they wanted to pursue in terms of technology. Then we pulled them together and said "OK, given that this is the curriculum area, what is the project or what kind of activity would you like to carry out? " They sat down and described the activity and described all of the components to that activity. The next step was to determine what skills and what help do you need in order to facilitate the carrying out of that project. In order for the kids to learn and to work together, collaboratively and this was over a number of schools. In order for the kids to do that, what do you as a teacher need? What kinds of skills do you need? And so now we are going through the process to make sure that teachers have the skills. Small workshops always tied back to the curriculum. Everything is always tied back to the curriculum project or the activity. That which the teachers identified. And at the same time they have provided the opportunity to mentor or support each other and to collaborate. If one has a question, they can come to me or other members of my team or they can go to any of the other members of the project team. So now you have grade 2 teachers for example across the division that are e mailing, phoning, talking to each other about "how did you do this, how did you do that,? Every two or three weeks we gather together for an afternoon and look at the next skill that is needed for the project to come to completion. By the time the thing is done we will actually measure our success in terms of professional development by looking at what the students have done in terms of the learning and the project that they have created. So that is me as a professional development model that incorporates all of that. Teacher initiated, teacher directed in terms of what, time, in time and over time, teachers collaborate with each other and mentor and help each other.

I: So a team approach?

R: Nod yes

R: And there is a collective there and we work through all of the different phases. At the end we evaluate and look back, reflect and say "OK what could we have done differently, how can we help them and where do we go to next? It is just on going.

And at the end when we are finished this project, the question will be: what is the next project? What area of curriculum would you like to look at now.

I: With respect to the model and the collaborative approach then, what happens when a teacher, or you perceive a teacher or the group perceives a teacher not to buy in?

R: But they bought in to begin with. They initiated that project

I: The question more relates to a teacher not participating initially.

R: There are some grade 2 teachers in the division who have chosen not to participate.

I: That is the kind of teacher I am getting at. That is what I am getting at in terms of the question.

R: The original question was what is the best professional development.

I: Right

R: The best professional development is where we get the teacher to buy in. When the teacher does not choose to.. Sometimes... it continues to be some others forms of support. Or sometimes it is just watch and see and take a look at what these others are doing. Where I don't have three teachers from a school all participating; I only have one or two. At the end of this year, the third one who is not participating, will take a look and I guess our hope is they will say "boy, look at what is happening in that classroom. Look at what is happening here, Look at these kinds of things" and then will join in because they want to. There will always be some reluctant people.

I: Your hope then is to have people convinced by seeing the results of what other people are doing to say "OK I cannot do this on my own anymore, there are some good thing happening in that group?

R: Whether its the results of what is happening there or whether they are looking at the kids, looking at a variety of things whether the see the barriers are coming down, understanding that all professional development is there I suspect because change is happening. When you look at stage people. When you look at change people address change and the stages of change differently and in different time lines. It may take one individual very little time to be willing to let go of something in order to make a change or to develop something or to grow compared to the next individual who says I cannot do that yet and I am not ready to do that yet. I need to hang on to what I have got. We have to honor that to some degree. The question in here and that is why I asked you "evaluation or supervision and what stage in the supervision model. If the students are learning and there is effective instruction in the classroom, I can be more tolerant of a teacher who chooses not to change so rapidly or not to involve themselves in a variety

of professional development activities to the same extent someone else does. Where it becomes problematic is where there is not effective learning going on in the classroom

I: IF there is not effective learning and not effective participation in PD, then what?

R: Then we have a problem.

I: OK so what would your approach then be?

R: In those cases it becomes a more directive approach. And that is simply what it becomes. Again, there are stages from here is a suggestion, this is what I would like you to consider...For example, using the professional growth objective forms. One the one side with those that where its is their plan, they do the whole thing and it works wonderfully. With the teacher who is perhaps not so effective, it may involve, and not necessarily doing a whole bunch of PD, it may involve things like saying "look at are the things that are occurring and you need to come to some plan in terms of how to resolve those issues. Now you get to choose what PD you want and you get to choose the route that you want to do this, but in the end you need to get to this stage. And you can begin with that. Or you can, and in some cases you may have to go to the very end and say this is the result that will occur. This is how you will get to this result. This is when you will do it. And it is very clearly that you lay it out. Now typically, that will happen one in a thousand time. It was very rare that you will have to do that.

I: It does happen?

R: But it will happen

I: As you alluded to, depending on the participation of the individual, it then dictates your approach

R: Absolutely. Where they are at in their career, how much experience they have. There may be much more direction with a first year teacher. When you know a whole bunch more than they do and they have little experience other than their education training, you may need to give them lots of direction and lots of help. Still allowing them to have control of the plan or what they are going to do but you may need to give them lots of input. There are other circumstances where I am supervising teachers who have far more experience and knowledge than I do in areas that I know nothing about.

I: Such as

R: Supervising a band teacher; a music teacher. Supervising a teacher whose primary function in a school is in vocational education. The "dirty" technologies for example. Supervising a kindergarten teacher who has had 15 years of experience teaching kindergarten. They know much more than I do about what it is that they need to do in that classroom. So in those cases I am there. However, I am a mirror, I am a sounding

board. They have to have a lot of direction and a lot of control in terms of what they do. I am there as a resource if I can be.

I: So your role then turns to supportive

R: But you can see my role with that kind of teachers is certainly different than my role with a teacher who is in their first year out. Especially if they are teaching in an area where I have 15 or 20 years of experience. Our roles change. And our roles change again when you continue to go down that line when a teacher does not acknowledge where there are some issues in their classroom.

I: That deals with the supervision and then it turns to evaluation and that is not a road you always want to go down.

R: Yes

I: I think you already answered the question in terms of what staff benefit from the least. Your view is the one shot session of....

R: Teacher convention kinds of activities. Days that are planned like teacher convention kinds of activities.

I: Where you bring in a speaker and they do two or three hours of their topic.

R: Are nice for kind of rah, rah keynote, let's feel good, but to be perfectly honest long terms effect is minimal and I think any research will bear that out.

I: OK

R: There are qualities of effective professional development and convention is not one of them. No research that I have ever seen will say that it is good solid PD. Now it does certain things and if it's parts of a plan, that is a different thing. If it happens to a music session at convention so I will go to that session, only activity I will do in music, and that is the only session I will do in music for three years, two years, one year, the benefit is minimal.

I: I think you touched on this a little bit in terms of what you expect from staff in terms of their PD. You expect them to come up with a plan, come up with activities, follow it through and reassess. Is that a fair summary of your expectations?

R: Yeah I expect that staff members are professionals. We like to use that word a lot when we talk about ourselves as teachers. And if we are indeed professionals... Professionals plan for themselves, professionals reflect upon their own actions, professionals look for improvement, and for ways to improve and professionals evaluate. Those are things that professionals do. And if you follow that cycle through

Appendix H

Curriculum Vitae

Curriculum Vitae

Leonard R. Arden

Education:

1997 – Present
The University of Alberta, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Master of Education in Educational Leadership
Expected completion: March 2001

1989 – 1993
The University of Alberta, Faculty of Education
Bachelor of Education, Biological Sciences Major
Degree granted 1983

1983 High School Graduation
F.G. Miller Jr. / Sr. High School
Elk Point, Alberta

Employment History:

May 1998 – Present
The Alberta Teachers' Association

Professional Development Instructor
Specific duties include:

Preparation for and instruction of professional development seminars on behalf of the Alberta Teachers' Association

October 1995 – Present
Sturgeon School Division No, 24

Lead Teacher, Sturgeon Learning Centre Outreach School
Responsibilities include

- Instruction in Mathematics and Science courses
- Work Experience supervision and support
- School operational policy development
- Sturgeon School Division: Registered Apprentice Program instruction, supervision and support
- Professional development support

- New mathematics curriculum implementation
- Technology integration
- Served as local council and PAC representative

January 1995 – August 1995 / Concurrent Positions

Alberta Vocational College, Fort Saskatchewan (0.75 FTE)
Term contract position for Adult High School Instruction in Mathematics and Science

The Edmonton John Howard Society (0.50 FTE)
Term contract position for Adult High School Upgrading and counseling

August 1994 – January 1995

Supply Teaching
Various postings and responsibilities within the Sturgeon School Division and Elk Island Public Schools

August 1993 – June 1994

Junior High Science / Senior High Mathematics
Hilltop Jr. / Sr. High School, Whitecourt, Alberta

Additional Courses:

WHMIS instructor certification September 1998
Excel spreadsheet level I and II 1997
First Aid 1995
Suicide prevention workshop 1995
Alberta Whitewater Association Level I 1994

Professional Memberships:

Mathematics Council
Science Council
Computer Council
Association Supervision and Curriculum Development

Volunteer Experience:

Uncles at Large, Edmonton
Klarvatten Neighborhood Park Association